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STICK 'EM



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Bream fishing is for the young and the old, and in May, it busts loose in Louisiana waters as bluegill and shellcrackers move into the shallows to spawn. Photo by Terry Madewell

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Outdoor  
**UPDATE**

Brice Jones caught this 10.36-pound bass during a Caney Lake Bass Club tournament.

Photo courtesy Brice Jones

# BASS CLUBBERS DOUBLE UP ON DOUBLE-DIGIT CANEY BASS

**H**ow many bass clubs can go years without having a member catch a 10-pound bass in a tournament? How many will ever have two double-digit bass show up at the same weigh-in?

The Caney Lake Bass Club can check the second box.

On Saturday, March 20, club members Mark Hedge and Brice Jones, both from West Monroe, mined Caney Lake for bass that

tipped the scales in excess of 10 pounds. Hedge's fish weighed 10.86; Jones' fish weighed 10.36.

Jones won the tournament with four bass that weighed 16.85 pounds; Hedge finished second with four that weighed 15.98, but he won big-fish honors.

So much for sharing the prize money with anybody else.

"I kind of feel for Brice," Hedge admitted. "He's sitting there with a big fish, and to come in second."

## LILY PADS DELIVER BIG BASS

Hedge put his big fish in the boat about an hour before Jones caught his. Hedge was fishing some lily pads about mid-lake, throwing a Sluggo in 2½ feet of water when his fish bit around 1 p.m.

"I had it over a little, open spot, and she hit it when it was drifting down," said Hedge, who was using a Shimano rod and Pflueger reel spooled with 20-pound Sufix braid. "I was just looking at that Sluggo, watching it fall, and all of the sudden, she grabbed it. I set the hook. The fight wasn't that bad. She ran to the back of the boat, came around the front of the boat to the other side, and she just wore herself out. I finally got her to the boat and lipped her.

"There was another guy in the club sitting about 25 yards away from me, and he asked what I thought, and I said, 'Maybe an 8½. Then, when I got her out of the livewell (for the weigh-in), I thought, 'She's a lot better than that.'"

The complicating factor was that the bass was 26½ inches long and 20 inches in girth. In a word, already spawned out.

"I would like to have caught her 3 weeks earlier," Hedge said.

"She was all flat-bellied, spawned out. We had a lot of warm weather the week before, and the water temperature shot up to probably 70 degrees, and they did their thing."

The lunker wasn't Hedge's personal best; he caught an 11.15-pounder from Caney several years ago.



Mark Hedge of West Monroe hooked this Caney Lake 10.86-pounder on March 20, 2021.

Photo courtesy Mark Hedge

**“** I heard him yell '10.86' to someone, and I thought, 'You've got to be kidding me. What are the chances two bass over 10 pounds get caught in the same tournament?' **”**

## RIGHT DOCK, RIGHT TIME

Jones' 10.36-pound fish was his best, and he thinks it was close to spawning but had not spawned when it was caught, despite it being 26 inches long and 19½ inches in girth.

"Her tail was bloodied up on the bottom, but just looking at her, she was prespawn," he said. "She still had her egg mass."

Jones caught her around a dock he'd fished earlier in the day.

"I found a dock with a lot of brush, maybe five Christmas trees out front, and I was pitching under the dock and caught a 4-pounder, then another," he said. "I went back in the creek and fished, but I knew I was going to come back and fish the dock again; I'd just caught two in 30 minutes. But when I came back, there was a guy sitting in a chair on the end of the dock, fishing, so I went back in the creek.

"I kept watching for him to leave, and when he got out of his chair, I cranked up and took off. I was approaching the dock on my trolling motor, and I just pitched down the side of the dock toward the bank — not where I really wanted to cast, but I just threw up there shallow, maybe a foot of water. When I was there before, I'd seen a tiny, tiny bass go up shallow and run some bait up there. That's why I pitched in there. I was just blind-casting in there."

## JONES BAGS HIS LUNKER

Jones was fishing an Enigma HPT 7-foot-3 heavy action rod, with a Lew's reel spooled with 20-pound Seaguar Red Label fluorocarbon tied to a 5/0 straight-shank Owner hook that carried a Strike King Rage Tail Craw.

"I just gave it one shake, and she was on it. It didn't feel like a bass," said Jones, who was thinking catfish or freshwater drum when the fish burst out from the dock. "She came up and was about a foot under the surface, and I didn't see her good. I said, out loud, 'What was that?' When she came back up, she was on her side, and I knew it was a bass.

"She gave up real quick. I got my dip net, and she was almost too big to go in it. I draped her across the net, trying to get her in head-first, and I finally did. I put her over on the scales, and all I remember was seeing it go over 10. I put her in the livewell, picked up my phone and called my wife and told her to load up the kids and come to Caney.

Hedge and Jones showed up at the weigh-in at Jimmie Davis State Park, both figuring they had the big-fish category and first place locked up. They were half-right. The two fish were weighed on certified scales and released alive.

"I saw Mark Hedge walking down the end of the dock holding a big one," Jones said. "I heard him yell '10.86' to someone, and I thought, 'You've got to be kidding me. What are the chances two bass over 10 pounds get caught in the same tournament?'" ■

# JENNINGS ANGLER BOATS BIG TOLEDO BEND BASS, BREAKS ROD NEXT DAY

**J** By Dan Kibler  
Jeffrey Tall of Jennings broke a fishing rod on March 19. It was an old rod, so well-used that all the writing had been worn off the blank: the name of the manufacture, its length, action, what size lures it would best cast.

You could say the rod went out with a bang.

The previous day, Tall had used it to land a 10.81-pound Toledo Bend bass.

"It was one of the last bites we got. We caught one right after we caught the big one," Tall said. "We didn't catch a whole bunch of fish that day, but some of them were all right."

Tall was fishing in Housen Creek with buddy Kevin Richard, casting a football jig on 20-pound Seaguar fluorocarbon in 5 of 6 feet of water.



Jeffrey Tall of Jennings landed a 10.81-pound Toledo Bend bass on March 18.

"They were definitely not on the bed, but they might have been fixing to move in," Tall said. "It was a good bite. I definitely knew I'd gotten bit. She came up and wallowed a little bit, and I thought she was 5 or 6 pounds. Then, she took off and started going crazy under the boat. That's when I realized she was bigger than 5 or 6."

## BOATING A BIG 'UN

Tall finally got the fish under control, and when he led her boat-side, he reached down, lipped the big fish and brought her aboard.

"We checked her on a scale we had in the boat, and she was 10.77," said Tall, who motored to Fin and Feather to have her officially weighed and do the paperwork to get the fish registered with the Toledo Bend Lake Association's lunger program.

"We knew what we had. When we put her on the scales at Fin and Feather, she weighed 10.81," said Tall, who already has a replica mount of a fish entered in the lunger program, a 10.98-pound bass.

"I broke that rod the next day." ■

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# ADD 3 MORE WHOPPERS TO TOLEDO BEND'S LIST OF BIG BASS

**T** By Kinny Haddox  
oledo Bend isn't through turning out spring lunkers just yet; the spawn is just getting under way. Even though the weather turned nasty and water temperatures dropped as late March approached, it didn't deter three fishermen from bringing in monster largemouth bass.

Three more 10-pound-plus largemouths were caught at Toledo Bend between March 19 and 21 and entered into the Toledo Bend Lunker Bass Program, where anglers get a free replica and superior fish are used for breeding, then released back into the lake. It's a popular program that helps biologists take advantage of the genetics of huge bass to help produce more fry and, in turn, more big bass for the future.



Travis Broussard used a white spinnerbait to pluck this 12.07-pound monster from the waters of Toledo Bend.



Lloyd "Hoss" Fowler with his 10.05-pound "hoss" of a bass caught on a wacky worm.

The three fish from massive 190,000-acre reservoir on the Louisiana-Texas border brought to 19 the number of entries this season.

Lloyd "Hoss" Fowler of Borweir, Texas, got things rolling on March 19 with a 10.05-pound lunker; he was joined the same day by Keith Breaux of Gueydan, whose bass weighed 11.51 pounds.

Travis Broussard of Lake Charles finished up the run with the biggest of the three on March 21. His whopper weighed 12.07 pounds.

While many anglers focus on the banks and look for bedding bass this time of year, neither of the three were caught there. They were caught in three different types of areas using three different techniques and lures.

## BIG ONE BITES SPINNERBAIT

Broussard's big bass was one of several he has caught and entered into the program over the years, but it is his personal best. He caught the big fish about 8 a.m., throwing a white Booyah spinnerbait. He likes white when the fish are feeding on shad, but he said when the bite is on, color isn't critical. If they are hungry and think it's something to eat, they'll nail it. It's more about getting the bait in the right type of cover and fishing it where it triggers them to bite.

"We were fishing in a grass flat and just working the spinnerbait across the top of the grass," he said. "The fish were pretty active that morning, considering everything. We had just found an area with a school of nice ones and boated several big fish. On the big one, there wasn't anything special I did or that I threw the bait by. We were just covering ground and fishing the grass in about 10 to 12 feet of water. When she hit, I knew I had a good one. She put up a big fight, and it was pretty exciting when we realized just how big she was. I've caught several 10s and 11s, but this one was obviously the biggest I've caught."

## TAGGED FISH

The fish had an old tag in it, but it was unreadable. Broussard was hoping he could find out when it was caught and released before, but he wasn't able to do so. But it was obvious that the fish was caught and released before and that's why this lunker program is so important, he said. People should take care of big fish like this and get them back in the water.

Broussard said the fish was staging in the deeper water, getting ready to spawn. He said Toledo Bend fish sometimes spawn in

deeper water like the spot he caught this one.

"A lot of people don't believe it, but I've seen them spawn in that deep of water," he said. "They'll even spawn in 20 foot of water on brushtops and the tops of stumps that stick up 4 to 5 feet below the surface. It's all about what's available and the water temperature."

## A 'HOSS' FOR HOSS

Fowler also paid close attention to the water temperature when he caught his "hoss" of a bass. He and his partner had backed off the spawning flats and were fishing a wacky rigged Senko up and down a creek bed that ran beside a great spawning flat.

"When we left the house, there was a north wind, and I don't usually fish in a north wind," Fowler said. "But we went, and when we got there, the water temperature had dropped about 10 degrees from our previous trip, so we just slow fished back and forth on the edge of that creek. The fish had backed off the flat, and that's where they were."

Fowler may have discovered a new secret fish attractant in the process of catching his personal best bass. He had just finished eating a chicken salad snack, bagged his trash, then picked up his green pumpkin/red flake Senko and shook it before making a long cast. The fish loaded up on it, and the fight was on.

"The reason I was in that creek was because I was fishing with a high schooler in one of their tournaments the week before, and he caught a tagged fish," he said. "He wasn't signed up, but I knew that fish didn't travel far. Turns out, I caught one even better than the tagged fish."

Fowler has caught a bigger bass before, but it was a football-shaped fish from Lake Fork. It weighed slightly more than 11 pounds, but it was a ¼-inch short of the 24-inch slot limit, and he had to let it go.

"Those fish use those creeks like a highway this time of year, and they are either moving up and down them looking for food, or they stage there and hang out until everything gets right up in the shallower water," he said. "With the water temperature considerably lower, we also fished the lure really slow. That's the way they wanted it."

## SLOW START, FAST FINISH

Breaux and his partner got off to a slow start in a tournament, fishing for a while and catching only a couple of small bass. They were both fishing watermelon red Rage Tail worms.

"I told my partner they just weren't liking that color, so I was going to switch to something white, and when I turned around to get a new bait, I saw some Larew Blueberry Craws that looked good, so I tied one on. I put it on a wobblehead hook and about

Keith Breaux landed this nice 11.51-pound Toledo Bend lunker on a C-Craw.



three casts later, I caught a 6-pounder. A few casts later, I caught a 5. Then things slowed down for me."

It didn't pick back up until close to noon, "a bunch of casts later," Breaux said. He tossed out the craw and gave it a few cranks when the big fish jumped on it.

"She hit it hard, man," he said. "I told my partner to get ready to help me because I had a big one. He wasn't sure he believed me, and in a few seconds, the big fish went around a stump. I just knew I was going to lose her. But I put my foot on the trolling motor and headed that way. Before I could get there, she came loose and took off again. I told him again to come give me a hand and about that time to fish flashed. That time, he got moving and helped me get it in."

His partner looked at the fish and said, "Man, I think we're going to win!"

## A BIG STUMPKNOCKER

Breaux was fishing in a stump field when he hooked his double-digit bass. The water varied from 7 to 12 feet deep; the fish were suspended out on the stumps.

"I knew with this weather that the fish were not going to be on the banks," he said. "They may have started spawning some ... but they weren't when we caught these fish."

Breaux has caught several bass larger than 10 pounds, including an 11-8 eight years ago. This one was special because he was able to put it in the lunker program. ■

# TEXAS ANGLER 'SNAKES' BIG BASS FROM TOLEDO BEND

**E** By Dan Kibler  
Imer Ernst caught a great bass on March 26, in the Indian Creek area of Toledo Bend Reservoir. He also caught a little water snake.

The two were a package deal. He just doesn't know how or when the package became unwrapped.

Ernst, a 65-year-old retiree from Orange, Texas, stuck the big fish, 10.13 pounds, 24¾ inches long and 18¾ inches in girth, on a wacky rigged chartreuse/watermelon Senko just after 7 p.m., fishing with his son, Brad.

"We had been fishing for 1½ hours, had caught a couple of fish, and we were heading back to Indian Creek; I've got a camp on Indian Creek," Ernst said. "We were out on a little point next to an island, and I threw up next to a stump. I thought I was hung up, but then he shook his head, and I said, 'Get the net.' He went up under the boat, and I thought he was gonna break off."

But his son got the big bass in the net, and when they examined it more closely, Ernst discovered a hitchhiker of sorts.

"The fish had a snake in the bottom of its throat, a little snake, about 12 inches long," Ernst said.

Ernst put the fish on a set of scales he had in his boat, and the scales read 9.97 pounds.

"That was too close; I knew I had to get him weighed on certified scales," he said. "After that, the biggest problem was getting him weighed that time of night."

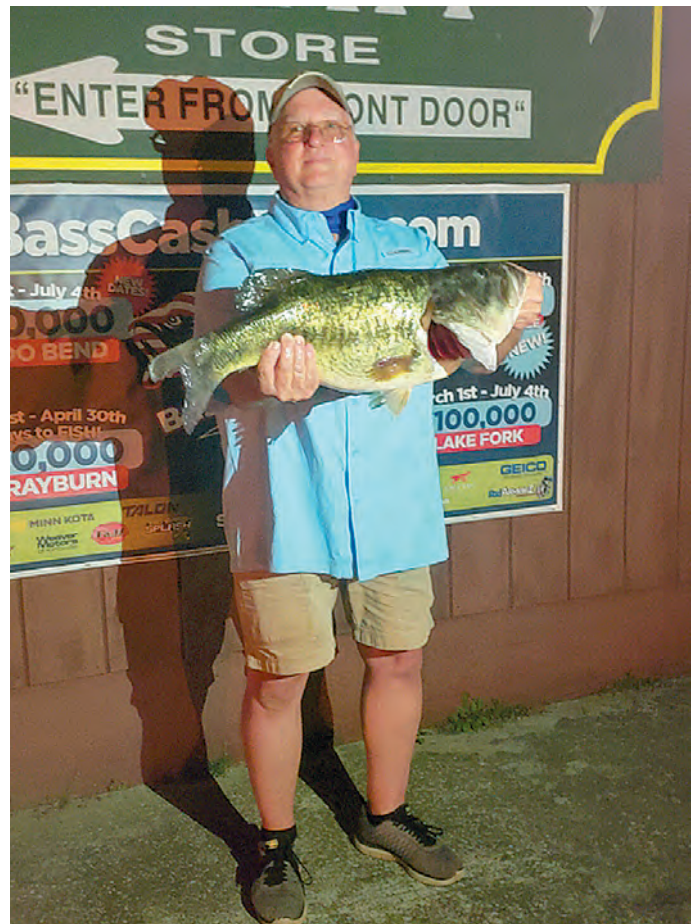
## WEIGHING THE LUNKER

Ernst got back to his camp, got the fish in a cooler and headed to Fin & Feathers to get the fish weighed on certified scales. He got there about 10 minutes after it closed, but, as Ernst said, "They had waited for us."

On certified scales, the fish weighed 10.13 pounds, qualifying for the Toledo Bend Lake Association's lunker program, which provides a replica mount to fishermen who catch double-digit bass and subsequently release them.

But what about the snake?

Well, Ernst doesn't know.



Elmer Ernst caught this 10.13-pound bass out of the Indian Creek area of Toledo Bend the evening of March 26, fishing a wacky rigged Senko.

"When we were releasing it, the snake was gone," Ernst said. "I don't know if he swallowed it or what. When we got him out to weigh him, the snake wasn't in the tank, and when we got him out to release him, he wasn't in there. Maybe he swallowed him."

## PLAYING TAG

Ernst said the fish, the biggest he's ever caught, carried an old tag from the lunker program — the fish had been caught before and logged into the program's records.

"It was a couple of years old," he said.

Ernst said he couldn't tell for sure whether the big bass had already spawned.

"She didn't have a bloody tail; it was just worn a little bit. She wasn't fat with eggs. It was hard to tell. The main thing was, she was 10 pounds.

"As we were going down to the ramp to release her, this guy was there, backing his boat down. He asked, 'What are you doing?' I told him we were letting a big fish go. He asked, 'Can I hold it?'"

Ernst handed the man the fish, he lifted it, then put it in the water and released it.

The snake was still missing in action. ■



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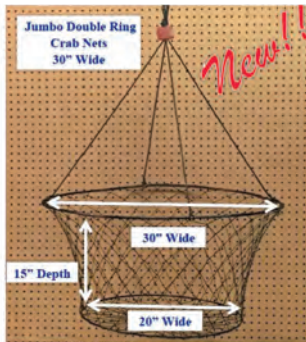
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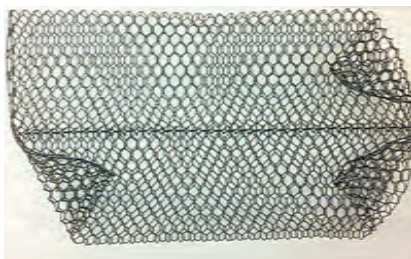
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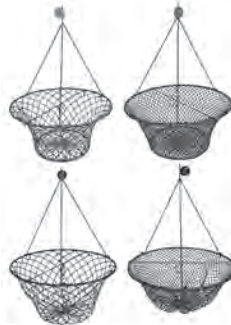
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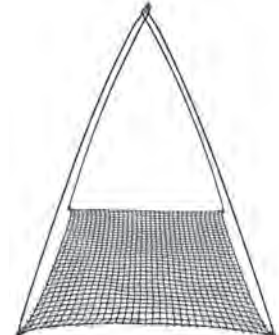
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# MANY ANGLER SCORES LUNKER TOURNAMENT BASS FROM TOLEDO BEND ON THIRD CAST

**W**hen Herby Dauphinat, a retired oil-field worker from Many, and his son-in-law, David Thompson, idled their boat away from the launch at Cypress Bend the morning of March 27, they had no idea they would return hours later with a 10.79-pound largemouth bass.

Dauphinat and Thompson were fishing the annual Dylan Kyle Poche Memorial Bass Tournament held in memory of a local man whose life tragically ended 5 years ago. Although Dauphinat had fished other tournaments on Toledo Bend, he had never fished this one.

Dauphinat made his first cast at 6:45 a.m., fishing United Bay. They liked the layout: a little bit of grass and plenty of good structure.

Dauphinat started with a 3/8-ounce Humdinger spinnerbait on a Falcon rod and Shimano reel combo. He cast once and reeled the spinnerbait back to the boat. Fishing shallow water, he could see the dull flash of the spinnerbait's blades during the retrieve. He cast a second time. Nothing.

Dauphinat placed his third cast right up against the trunk of a cypress tree.

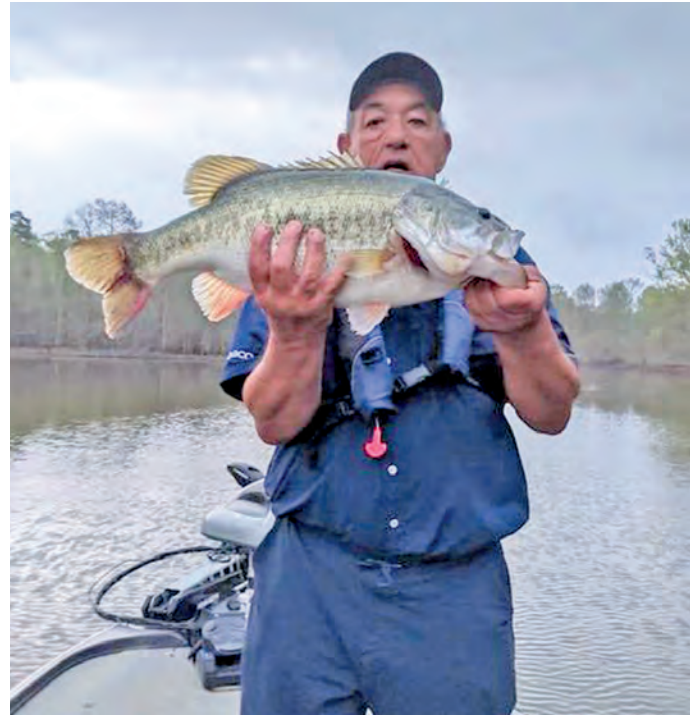
"(The bass) was totally against the cypress, about a foot-and-a-half deep," he said. "When I flipped the spinner, I let the lure sit for a second or two, and when I moved it, that's when she grabbed it and started walking away with it."

## MYSTERY FISH

What Dauphinat meant by "walking" was that the fish didn't hit the lure hard; he thought she was just trying to move it out of her bed. She grabbed it as soon as he began to work the lure away from the cypress tree. But he didn't know that he'd hooked a bass at first.

"I thought I hooked a gou (freshwater drum)," Dauphinat said, because the fish was flashing white in the murky water.

"Man, don't worry about the net," he said to Thompson, "It's a gou."



Herby Dauphinat of Many was fishing the Dylan Kyle Poche Memorial Bass Tournament on March 27 when he caught this 10.79-pound bass.

But what Dauphinat had on the end of his line wasn't a gaspergou. When he set the hook, the bass rolled hard to her side, showing her white belly. In the murky water, it didn't look like a bass.

"But when she flipped back over..." Dauphinat said he realized his mistake, telling Thompson, "Yeah... Go ahead and get the net" — more-or-less.

"I didn't have to play her for very long. She gave up quick," he said. "The whole thing was done in a couple of minutes."

Thompson scooped up the bass with the net, and she was in the boat.

After celebrating the impressive catch, Dauphinat happened to check the time: 6:50. The tournament was all of 5 minutes old.

Dauphinat's fish was the biggest of the tournament at 10.79 pounds. The two closest weighed 9.81 and 9.53 pounds, respectively. After it was certified, Dauphinat's beautiful bass was entered into the Toledo Bend Lake Association's Lunker Bass Program. Like all fish in the program, it was released back into the reservoir. Dauphinat will receive a replica fish to commemorate the impressive catch, as well as bragging rights that will pay out for the rest of his life. ■

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# BACK-TO-BACK: PINEVILLE MAN LANDS 2 DOUBLE-DIGIT CANEY BASS ON 2 CASTS

**On** By Will Martin  
Sunday, March 28, Dustin Chelette of Pineville caught double-digit largemouth bass on back-to-back casts at Caney Lake.

The fish weighed 10.17 pounds and 10.93 pounds, respectively.

Chelette had chosen a spot on the main part of Caney, a 5,000-acre reservoir in Jackson Parish, that had produced decent fish for him before.

"It's a place I know they like to spawn," he said.



Dustin Chelette of Pineville had an amazing few minutes on Caney Lake on March 28, catching these two double-digit bass on back-to-back-casts.

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There was some spotty hydrilla and a little needle-grass, but the topography was the draw for the fish. The area features a slow, flat drop-off from a secondary point.

Chelette was catching smaller fish in 2 to 3 feet of water. He guessed that the larger bass were out a little deeper, so he backed off and changed lures. He tied on a black/blue V&M jig on a 7-foot-4, Falcon LowRider casting rod paired with a Daiwa Tatula 100HS reel spooled with 20-pound Sunline Super FC Sniper line.

"Any ordinary point on Caney is fished the same way, especially towards the north end of the lake where it's much shallower," he said. "You fish the drop-offs."

## BEING ADAPTABLE

After making the changes, Chelette hooked the first of the two big bass. Until he had her in the boat, he didn't think she was anything like a double-digit fish. She didn't fight much, and he got her to the boat without trouble. Chelette didn't have a net, so he reached down and lifted her into the boat.

To his surprise, the fish, 26½ inches long and weighed 10.17 pounds.

"I threw her in the livewell and didn't think much about it," Chelette said. "I figured I'd caught my best of the day."

## BE PERSISTANT

Having established that the spot held big fish, Chelette decided to stay put.

"I stood up and cast into the same spot where I caught the first one," Chelette said. "I (finessed) the jig one time, and she hit."

This bass hit hard. Chelette figured immediately that the fish was bigger than the first one. The adrenaline hit him like a train, because if it was bigger than the first fish, it might be a whale.

"She took enough line out that I had to pick the (Power Poles) up and chase her with the trolling motor for a second," Chelette said.

Eventually, he was able to get her turned around and started getting line back. As had happened earlier, when the fish was spent, he eased her next to the boat and picked her up by hand. This fish weighed 10.93 pounds and was 24 inches long.

"I caught two bass over 10 pounds in back-to-back casts," Chelette said. "So I just quit and went home while I was ahead."

After he found someone to take photos of his special fishing moment, he released both fish back into the lake.

## MORE TO THE STORY

Chelette said he caught the first fish as she was coming off the bed; she was a post-spawn bass. But the second fish — caught in the same spot as the first — was full of eggs.

"I caught them passing one another," Chelette said. "One

was moving out, and one was moving in."

The timing was special, too. Chelette caught the fish five days before his 41st birthday; he called them his early birthday presents.

It was only later that Chelette realized how special the experience truly was.

"(At the time), I didn't even think about how rare it is," he said. "I've caught big fish before. I've caught several big fish, but I've never caught multiple, double-digit fish on the same day. And on two, back-to-back casts.

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# OAKDALE ANGLER UNTANGLES LUNKER

## TOLEDO BEND SPAWNER FINALLY BITES AFTER NERVE-RACKING SETUP

**On** the morning of April 9, David Perales of Oakdale, a 65-year-old retiree turned hard-core bass fisherman, arrived at Toledo Bend's Blue Lake Launch. The Louisiana Oilmen's Tournament was underway, and he'd come early, hoping to beat the crowds.

As he motored away from the launch, he couldn't have foreseen that when he returned later in the day, he would have a 10.14-pound largemouth bass in his boat.

Perales started the day fishing a point, but his mind drifted, returning to a spot where water lilies and buckbrush had enticed

David Perales of Oakdale had to unwrap this 10.14-pound, Toledo Bend bass from a tangled buck bush before putting her safely in his boat.



him the last time he'd fished Toledo Bend. That's where he headed. It was a hard place to fish. The bank was a tangle of dense buckbrush, notorious for grabbing line and not letting go, but bass love it. The bushes spill from the bank into the shallows, providing plenty of cover for bass on their beds. Farther out, where the water is a little deeper, lily pads cluster on the surface.

### SCATTER THE BAIT

Perales eased into the lily pads, towards a gap in the buckbrush that looked fishable. He set his HydroWave unit to "Shad Blitz," a



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setting that transmits the sound of agitated shad into the water to get the real shad moving.

"There was a gap in the buckbrush where I could see the shad and the bass," he said. "That's what I fished."

The baitfish movements turned to frenzy and panic, making a small area near the bank begin to roil, like a hard rain was falling there and nowhere else. Then, like a long wave rolling diagonally to the shore, a large bass pushed through the dark water toward the alerted shad, and then another bass followed.

Perales thought one of the bass looked like a trophy-quality fish. He couldn't be sure. The water was muddy, and the fish were in a frenzy.

Perales made a perfect cast to the near side of the bass, but she didn't budge. He cast again and again, changing lures three times without getting a reaction. He decided he needed to present the bait in a different fashion.

He decided to move the boat so that he could cast to the other side of the fish. He'd have to cast over a low bush to get to her, but he was determined to try.

Using a Lew's rod and reel combo spooled with 15-poung Big Game mono, Perales slung a watermelon Fluke over the bush, and the lure fell with a satisfying plop. He let the weightless Fluke sit, twitched it a time or two, and the bass finally slammed the bait.

"I set the hook," Perales said, "and reeled as fast as I could to try to get her out of the brush."

But the line was tangled in the gnarled branches. The bass never cleared the bush. "It was (suspended) half out of the water thrashing around," he said. "And I could see the fish, and I could tell that it was big."

The bass fought the line, the bush and fate itself, trying to get free.

"The head and about half of its body was above the surface thrashing back and forth," said Perales, who cranked the trolling motor to high and edged toward the fish.

"I was churning mud, and the trolling motor was getting bogged down with all the lily vines," Perales said. "Everything seems to go in slow motion when you hook a big fish like that; you are just so excited."

He'd hooked a monster, and if he couldn't get to her soon, she'd sling the hook and untangle herself. Perales fought his nerves, fought the trolling motor, fought his inexperience with the boat, which was relatively new, and he fought his fear.

## GRAB 10 POUNDS

"I managed to get to the fish," said Perales, who could do nothing but reach down and grab the line as close to the fish as he could and haul her up, breaking free of the branches.

"It was a good hookset, so it took a few minutes to get her unhooked," Perales said, who remembered his hands shaking as he handled the fish.

Once she was unhooked, Perales tossed the big bass into the livewell, and then it was all over.

After the fish was weighed and certified at 10.14 pounds, it was entered into the Toledo Bend Lake Association's Lunker Bass Program. It was released back into the reservoir. Perales will receive a replica fish to commemorate the impressive catch.

"I'm just blessed," said Perales, "truly blessed that I got to catch another one over 10 pounds." ■

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# SPRING TROUT BITE STRONG ON PONTCHARTRAIN



Chas Champagne caught this 6-pound speck from Pontchartrain on April 6 as a promising spring opens.

**C** By Will Martin  
has Champagne, owner of Matrix Shad, caught a 6-pound, 25-inch speckled trout on April 6 in Lake Pontchartrain along the US 11 Bridge, a spot renowned for producing record-breaking fish.

“Out of the 10 biggest trout ever caught in Louisiana history,” Champagne said, “right now, two of them came from that exact bridge.”

His recent trout is the biggest he’s caught in the past three years. Still, Champagne remembers a time when bigger fish were commonly caught in Pontchartrain. He cites the closing of the MRGO in 2009 and repeated openings of the Bonnet Carré Spillway — the spillway has been opened four of the last five years

— as likely causes for the decline in the fishing.

“The one thing that makes me feel comfortable is that it’s not just the lake seeing the change,” Champagne said. “All of Louisiana has been declining for speckled trout, so maybe it’s a bigger thing, and the fishing will cycle back to normal!”

Champagne jokes that he’s forgotten what it’s like to fish in the spring. With the openings every year, it has been emotionally tough on everyone who depends on the fishing in Lake Pontchartrain.

But this is a brand new season, and so far, the prospects for a productive year look good.

“The fishing in our area has been pretty strong,” Champagne said. “Now that we’re not having to fight (the spillway), we’ve been having a nice little run of fish here.” ■

A large advertisement for Henderson Blue Wave boats. The background shows a white boat with a black canopy and a Yamaha outboard motor on a body of water. Several people are on the boat, some holding fishing rods. The text "BLUE WAVE" is prominently displayed in the upper right, and "HENDERSON" is in the lower center. At the bottom, contact information is provided: LAKE CHARLES: 337.436.4366 | ABBEVILLE: 337.893.1451 | HENDERSONIMPLEMENT.COM

# 2021 CCA STAR KICKS OFF MAY 29

By Will Martin

It's that time of the year again. The 27th annual CCA Louisiana STAR (Statewide Tournament and Anglers Rodeo) will begin on Saturday, May 29. The tournament will span the summer, ending on Labor Day, Sept. 6.

STAR is Louisiana's largest saltwater fishing tournament, boasting more than 13,000 participants competing for more than \$500,000 in prizes.

The tournament has a little something for every Louisiana saltwater angler.

Its signature division is the Tagged Redfish Division. CCA releases 100 tagged redfish each year. If you are in the tournament and catch one of the first 10, you win. The first fish is worth a Chevy Silverado pickup, the second a Keystone Passport RV, the next two NauticStar boats and the last five GatorTail boats.

For speckled trout, Louisiana's coast is divided into West, Southwest, East and Southeast divisions. The heaviest specks caught in each division will win NauticStar boats; the second-heaviest in each division will win a \$5,000 tackle package and the third in each division a \$2,500 tackle package.

STAR also has many inshore and offshore divisions with great prizes up for grabs.

## EARLY BIRD PRIZE

New to the STAR tournament this year is the early bird contest. Participants who enter before May 1 are eligible for a special drawing. The winner will receive a 195 XTS NauticStar boat equipped with a 155 HP Mercury, 4-stroke outboard.

"All you have to do is be entered by May 1, and you can win that boat without ever wetting a line," said Rad Trasher, the tournament director. Only members of the Coastal



Entering the STAR Tournament and catching a tagged redfish could put a lucky angler in a new truck, RV or boat. **BELOW:** A big flounder carries a rich prize, too.

Conservation Association or its youth organization, the New Tide, can participate in Louisiana STAR. If you are not already a member, the standard membership is only \$35.

In addition to active membership, participants must pay a registration fee of \$35 to compete in the 2021 tournament. Go to [ccastar.com](http://ccastar.com) to become a member of CCA or register for STAR 2021.

## DIVISIONS, PRIZES

Besides tagged redfish and trout, STAR offers competition in 11 other divisions: mangrove snapper, cobia, dorado (dolphin), red snapper, flounder, sheepshead, fly-fishing, kayak-fishing, ladies and youth.

Top prizes for the heaviest mangrove snapper, cobia, dorado and red snapper will be \$5,000 tackle packages for



the heaviest mangrove snapper, cobia, dorado and red snapper.

Other divisions include fly fishing, flounder, kayak, ladies and bank fishing. ■

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**YAMAHA**

The brown pelican, photographed by LDWF biologist Casey Wright, seen on Queen Bess Island in March 2021.



Photo courtesy Casey Wright, LDWF

## **HOMeward BOUND:** **A PELICAN'S JOURNEY** **FROM CATASTROPHE**

**T** By Will Martin  
he story of a brown pelican called "Red 33Z" — after its tag color and number — is a story of survival. A victim of the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill in 2010, it was captured on June 14, 2010, near Grand Isle. Cleaned and rehabilitated, it was flown to a U.S. Coast Guard station in Brunswick, Ga. — a trip of more than 700 miles — where it was released on July 1, 2010.

Red 33Z was one of 582 brown pelicans rehabbed and relocated to areas deemed a safe distance from the spill, including parts of the Louisiana, Georgia, Texas and Florida coasts. Another 11 birds rescued from the spill were determined not to be releasable; these birds were sent to zoos and sanctuaries.

The fear was that the rescued birds would return to areas contaminated by the spill.

"Brown pelicans, like most seabirds, are thought to be hard-wired, genetically, to return to their birth colony to breed, despite moving long distances during the non-breeding season," said ornithologist Robert Dobbs of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

### **BIRD RECOVERIES**

According to an April 8 press release from LDWF, "More than 5,000 birds, dead and alive, were collected in Louisiana because of the disaster. This comprised approximately 65% of the bird

recoveries throughout the Gulf of Mexico. Brown pelicans made up 22% of all recoveries. Data suggest that the spill resulted in between 51,000 and 84,000 birds killed, and the actual number was likely on the high end of that scale."

"(Red33Z) was released in a group of about 70 birds on the Atlantic coast of Georgia," said biologist Casey Wright of LDWF, who spotted and photographed the bird on Queen Bess Island in Barataria. "The last time that I saw it was in 2012 in Georgia, so whenever I saw it last month, it was the first time it had been seen in 8 years, and it was the first time it was seen in Louisiana since its removal."

"The bird was banded as an adult," Wright said, "so that makes it at least 15 years old. But it could be older than that."

She said that it is impressive that it made its way home.

"Queen Bess Island, which was heavily impacted by the oil spill, is a key colonial waterbird nesting colony that accounts for 15% to 20% of young brown pelicans hatched in Louisiana in a given year," the release said.

Queen Bess Island, now managed as a refuge, had been reduced to about five acres of available nesting habitat before a LDWF restoration project in 2019-2020. It now provides 36 acres of prime real estate for brown pelicans and other birds. ■

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■ By Kinny Haddox

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**But bream fishing? Bream fishing has pretty much remained, well, it's still just**

***BREAM FISHING.***

If you fish for pure pleasure and to stack up an ice chest full of tasty bream for supper, it remains a simple pleasure. And the lures and techniques have remained pretty much the same over decades. That's one of the pleasures.

But you can do a few things to ramp up your success and pleasure. It doesn't cost any more, doesn't require any special gear — just a little more effort. Just pay a bit more attention to where you drop your hook, line and sinker. Target places to put your bait and hit the bull's-eye; don't just pitch and wish. You can even catch bream from the bank or a boat dock looking for this type of structure.

When you are serious about bream fishing, you need to stay on target. Study the area you're fishing and pick out the best types of structure to fish; Don't just toss your cricket into a

random spot. Target your casts and bobber placement the way you would fishing for bass or crappie. Pay attention to where you catch them — and where you don't. Developing a pattern for what the bream are doing will help you minimize your wasted fishing time and maximize your catch.

Here are six types of spots to look for to put the bull's-eye on bream this spring and summer:

## **BREAM BEDS**

You can't always see bream beds; sometimes, you have to search for them with a cricket or worm. Look for places just a few yards off the bank and open areas between trees and grass. If you pay attention, you may have a hidden talent like Randy Tucker of Farmville, who can smell a bream bed in shallow water 10 yards away. It's just a faint fishy smell, but if you are paying attention, you know you are within fishing distance of a bed. Don't just assume it's a dead gar floated up on the bank.

Bream like sandy or gravel bottoms, and they want a place where the sun shines on the beds. Tucker said bream bed, to some degree, on every full moon through spring and into summer on most lakes when water and weather conditions are right.

## **BOAT DOCKS AND PIERS**

BELOW: Late-spring bream fishing is a joy that many Louisiana anglers enjoy every chance they get, putting nice fish like this one in the cooler. >





◀ If your lake is drawn down, you can make your own "bream bed" by using scrap lumber and a few sacks of pea gravel.

## BREAM BED AND BREAKFAST

Even though fishing for bream is the most basic of fishing pursuits, you can still take a few steps to kick up your bream-busting efforts, including making your own bream beds. If you live on a lake that has regular drawdowns like Farmville's Randy Tucker, it is best to do that when the lake is lowered.

Simply build a 2x6 or 4x6 wooden frame out of 1x4 lumber and place it on the bottom of the lake. Fill it 3 to 4 inches deep with pea gravel, and let nature take its course. The best depth of water is between 3 to 4 feet deep.

"Bream love to bed up where there is a little gravel," he said. "It's a great place to build nests and for bream to feed."

If you want to enhance a spot when the lake isn't low, you can take several of bags of pea gravel — you can buy them at any local home-improvement store — and dump them in an area where bream like to hang out. You'll be surprised how quickly the bream come to those spots. ■

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Boat docks and piers are hardly ever just boat docks and piers. Many owners of such structures also position things under and around piers or docks to attract fish: old Christmas trees, wooden pallets, cinder blocks with PVC pipes stuck in concrete — almost anything. They are great places for tiny baitfish to hide and therefore, great places for bream to feed. Algae also grows on these items, and bream can feed on it. Several brands of man-made, fish-holding structures are available, and more people are putting them out. Pay attention when you are fishing to visible signs of these structure.

Fish all the pilings that support the dock or pier. Fish from the bottom up. Sometimes, fish stay on the bottom and other times they suspend over the structure.

## BRUSH PILES, FALLEN TREES

Mother Nature takes care of her own, and these types of spots are a haven for fish activity. Bream love to get in the edges of


brush piles and the limbs of fallen trees around the shoreline. When fishing these, start on the outside and work your way in. That way you don't spook any fish, and you can figure out where they are located. This is a good place to "pattern" bream. If the fish are on the end of one treetop, there's a good bet that's where they will be on any treetops that you fish that day.

## CYPRESS TREES, STUMPS

Fish don't usually gang up in big bunches around live trees and stumps, but you can find some of the best bream in these spots. Again, if you are in 5 feet of water, start out shallow and fish the stump all the way down to the bottom to try and locate fish. Remember, cypress trees have massive root systems, so don't just fish right by the tree, but anywhere within a couple of feet around it.

## GRASS BEDS

Grass shrimp, crawfish and other small creatures are favorite foods of bream. Some of the favorite spots to find these are the edges of or holes of grass beds. Bream also bed in open areas of a grass bed. Fishermen should never pass up a good-looking grass bed. Lily pad fields also hold bream. Bream can often feed off the bottom of lily pads, and if you'll pay attention, you'll hear little popping sounds and see lily pads move slightly. That usually signals a bream under there. If there's an opening between pads, there's an easy bite waiting for you.

Bream will congregate on the outside edge of grass beds, waiting to ambush small creatures that venture out of the protective cover. 





## BANKS

If you don't have fancy electronics and are new to a body of water, there's no better money spot for bream than the bank. Just pick a good-looking one and head down the shoreline. Look for the kinds of structure that hold bream, and if the water is shallow, don't hesitate to fish on both sides of the boat.

While you are covering ground, take note of what other fishermen are doing. If they're catching fish, it's okay to mimic what they are doing.

## TECHNOLOGY BUMP

While all this is fairly basic, Tucker said there is one thing that new technology has given bream fishermen.

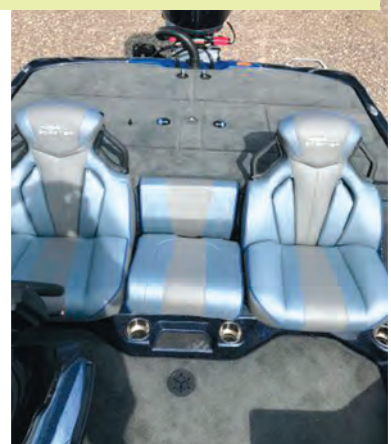
"If you have a depth finder with side-imaging, you can ease up and down an area, and you'll be astounded at how easy it is to spot areas with a bunch of bream beds on the sonar," he said. "There can be areas where you spot 20 to 30 little circles on the bottom. Those are beds. And while you can't see the fish on them, you can bet they are there." ■

◀ When a fishing game plan comes to fruition, here's one of the rewards: a chunky bluegill that will nearly fill up a frying pan by itself.

**ANOTHER THING THAT NEVER CHANGES** ▶

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# ANOTHER THING THAT NEVER CHANGES

The technological advances in the development of fillet knives have been good, but for a fisherman who grew up eating fish the "old fashioned way," a fillet knife isn't needed.

Randy Tucker is one of those guys. Give him a teaspoon and a sharp pocket knife, and he's got all he needs to get a mess of bream ready for the skillet.

Whole, fried bream. It's a culinary prize that fishermen have long enjoyed and still enjoy today.

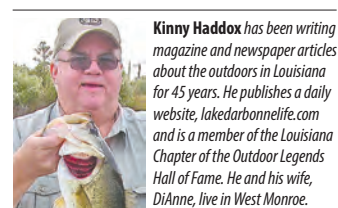


◀ A platter of whole, fried bream is a delicacy for many anglers with a taste for fish.

"When you fry a whole bream, you can eat the crispy tail and fins, gently break apart the fish and eat the meat right off the bone. It's the tastiest thing out there," Tucker said. "You know what they say: the nearer the bone, the sweeter the meat. That's true for eating fish, too."

If you've never eaten whole, fried bream, give Tucker said to give it a try. You can eat the crunchy part of the tail, then break off the rest; remove the fins and the place your thumbs in the fish's cavity and gently pull it apart. The meat should easily separate from the bones for your enjoyment.

A word of caution: always be on the lookout for small bones, especially around the rib cages. ■



**Kinny Haddox** has been writing magazine and newspaper articles about the outdoors in Louisiana for 45 years. He publishes a daily website, [lakedarboonnlife.com](http://lakedarboonnlife.com) and is a member of the Louisiana Chapter of the Outdoor Legends Hall of Fame. He and his wife, DiAnne, live in West Monroe.

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MAY'S FULL MOON KICKS OFF BREAM FISHING IN THE SOUTHEAST; THE BATTLING, LITTLE PANFISH WILL BED IN THE SHALLOWS THROUGH THE SUMMER, PROVIDING GREAT ACTION FOR FISHERMEN YOUNG AND OLD.

# BEAR DOWN ON BREAM

By Phillip Gentry

# Very few fishing standards are as widely held and undeniably truer than fishing for bream

## AROUND THE FULL MOON IN MAY,

which falls this year on May 26. For generations, grandpas have passed along to their grandsons the simple wisdom that bream bed on the first full moon in May. Another simple aspect of grandpa's advice is that the same tackle, tactics and approach that supplied him with plenty of fresh bream fillets still work just as well today.

Matthew Outlaw is living proof. His fishing friends on social media often get their feelings hurt as he posts photo after photo of coolers loaded with better-than-hand-sized shell-crackers and bluegills. Ask him how he does it, and he'll just shrug; he grew up fishing in a swamp, same as his father and grandfather. He's also fishing pretty much the same way those before him did.

For example, Outlaw is not a fan of using trolling motors for bream fishing. He fishes from a 14-foot john boat, and when he gets in the vicinity of places he thinks he may find bream beds, he gets out a short paddle and sculls.

"The worst thing you could do in here is run the trolling motor," Outlaw said as he sculled with one hand and flipped his cork back into a hole from which he had just snatched a feisty, hand-sized bream. By maneuvering his boat the old-fashioned way, using a short oar to hold the boat in position, Outlaw was able to land the cork in the still widening ripples the earlier fish had made upon its exit.

Just like the previous dozen or so times, the cork hit the water, paused, then suddenly sank from view as if it had been tied to a brick. Outlaw hoisted back on his long, jiggling pole and swung a carbon copy of the most-recent fish into his grasp.

Another example is his tackle. The bream-fishing rig is simple. Grandpa's bamboo cane pole has been replaced by an ultra-light, graphite jig pole widely known as a Breambuster, but from the tip of the pole forward, time stands still. A 4- to 5-foot length of 10-pound monofilament is rigged with a No. 6 hook, split-shot weight and topped off with a toothpick cork.

The bait, impaled right through the carapace, is a garden variety bait-shop cricket — one of about 200 that are in a wire mesh box at Outlaw's hip as he sits, feet dangling in the water, on the front deck of the john boat.

No action or retrieve is needed; simply drop the rig into the bed and wait for the cork to go under or slew off to the side. When the action is hot, the cork may not sit on the surface for more than a second or two.



Matthew Outlaw is comfortable when he's in his john boat, probing the shallows of a cypress-filled swamp for bream like this one.

**A**lthough his home waters are well-known and yet widely misunderstood for producing larger-than-average bluegills and shell-crackers, it is a big place, full of trees and stumps and lily pads, and not all locations are suitable for bream beds.

Outlaw points out that the No. 1 factor for bream to bed is a hard bottom. Second is cover. He doesn't have much success around live cypress trees, finding instead that dead trees, stumps and fallen limbs have better appeal to spawning bream.

"I'll paddle into a swampy looking area, and if there's a stand of dead trees or a blowdown tree that's dead in the water, I'll ease over and probe the bottom with my rod. If I feel a hard sand, gravel or clay bottom, it's a pretty good bet there'll be some beds around it."

May is the month when male bream infiltrate the shallows and begin seeking out and creating nesting sites. They prefer hard

bottoms for nesting, even if that hard bottom is covered with several inches of mud. To get to the hard bottom, male bream will fan the bottom with their tails and create a saucer-shaped nest. Although this can be accomplished in open water, as in the case when water levels are low, bream feel much safer and more secure hiding their nests around structure.

"The hardest part about catching bream this time of year is finding them," said Outlaw. "I may spend a good half a day checking out possible locations before I come across bedding fish."

"I much prefer to have the water level about 3 or 4 feet above the original bank," he said. "That puts 2 or 3 feet of water up in the cypress and willow trees and makes it easier to locate bedding fish. If the water is too high, there can be acres and acres of places for fish to bed, and if it's too low, there's not enough shallow bottom."

Outlaw finds more bream on the beds around the full moon and then, around the new moon. He concurs that for a few days





A cage full of crickets will do wonders once a fisherman locates an area that's holding bream beds; crickets are probably the No. 1 bait for bluegills. **OPPOSITE:** Bream will move into the shallows in early May, the males first, then the females. The spawn typically begins around the full moon.

between these cycles, bream show a tendency to pull off the beds and hold in a little deeper water, but they're back a couple of days before the next moon and will repeat that cycle up to three times over the course of the summer.

"I start looking for bream on the beds the week before the full moon," he said. "Bream will go to fanning their beds, and when they do, they stink. You can smell them from 100 yards away. That fanning will also cause bubbles in the water. When I'm in an area I think bream would bed in, I'll approach with the wind in my face so I can smell them and I'll look for bubbles or fish popping on the surface."

Once he's found a couple such spots, it's time to start getting his fill. ■



**Phillip Gentry**, a veteran outdoor writer, is host of "The Outdoor Show," a weekly radio podcast, seen at [www.pgandboatgirl.com](http://www.pgandboatgirl.com).

## ARTIFICIALS FOR BREAM >

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# ARTIFICIALS FOR BREAM

While the lion's share of bream in the Southeast fall prey to natural baits, there are certainly artificials that are capable of filling a livewell just as quickly — without the mess and hassle. One of the best, time-tested artificial baits is Accardo's Ligon Bream Killer.

Some years ago, the Accardo Tackle Company acquired the rights to the Ligon Bream Killer and has been producing the slow-sinking, wet fly ever since.

"The Bream Killer is our best-selling fly, and is No. 2 in sales of all of our baits behind the Accardo Miss Prissy," said Don Davis, who runs breambugs.com, an internet retailer selling all



The Bream Killer is a top-drawer artificial lure for bluegills and shellcrackers, especially fished as a dropper under a popping bug.



Phillip Gentry

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manner of bream-catching artificial baits.

The Bream Killer is hand-tied on a No. 8 hook with soft chenille topped with squirrel hair trim and white rubber legs. The slow-sinking action of the fly is more than big bream can resist. The Bream Killer is best fished with fly tackle but easily converts to spinning tackle with the use of a small popping cork or strike indicator to give the fly some weight.

Davis also suggests using the Bream Killer in a Popper-Dropper rig and has put together instructions on how to tie it.

"I like to use a 6-pound test leader tippet about 5 feet long and add whatever cork body popper you like," he said. "The bug becomes your strike indicator and can also catch fish. To this, I add another 4-pound test leader tippet about 4 feet long with a Bream Killer as the dropper. I simply tie the second tippet by sliding the line through the hook eye of the popper and tying it tight. You may want to experiment and vary the length and size of the secondary tippet to suit your dropper fly, cast and delivery. Seldom do the two lines entangle, and you will often catch two bream at the same time." ■



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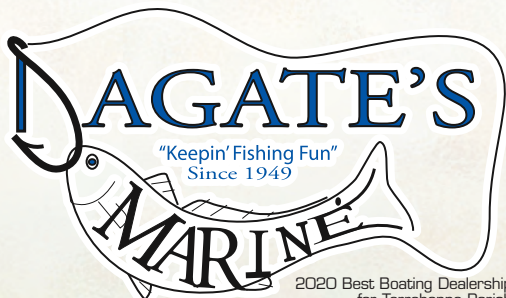
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# SAVE THE SHORELINE,

■ By Darren Digby

# TARGET THE FISH

**SHORELINE PROTECTION SYSTEMS HAVE AN ADDED BENEFIT TO BATTLING COASTAL LOSSES: THEY PROVIDE GREAT PLACES FOR GAMEFISH TO AMBUSH PREY AND FISHERMEN TO AMBUSH GAMEFISH.**



**With Louisiana's fragile shorelines retreating at alarming rates, shoreline protection systems have become key defenses in protecting what remains for generations to come. As a result, installations of various hard structure types are cropping up as part of the daily battle**

# AGAINST LAND LOSS.

Although large rocks are one of the most-common examples of such efforts, others are also being installed using a variety of man-made objects. Dubbed "living shorelines," these installations offer a number of benefits beyond shoreline protection against wave action.

From domes and cones, from triangular to circular, government entities like the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) are experimenting with manufactured structures well beyond the old standby boulders. Mesh baskets filled with oyster shells are also a key design being tested for further implementation.

"Biodiversity" may be the technical term project planners use, but to area fisherman, that translates to having all the key ingredients for productive fishing locations, as the structures

are havens for a myriad of aquatic species.

Though surface observations make them appear to be promising, their full value is only fully understood when a low tide reveals just how much biodiversity is present. Barnacles and oysters affix themselves to the structures, baitfish and crabs swim in, through and around every nook and cranny as well. To area anglers targeting gamefish like speckled trout, redfish, black drum and sheepshead, these structures provide everything a fish could want, from protection to food.

As the variety of species and structure shapes may greatly vary from reef to reef, there's no shortage of ways to effectively fish them. From your favorite soft plastics to live bait and even topwaters, a number of approaches can produce throughout the year.



## FIVE KEYS FOR SHORELINE REEF FISHING

The tried-and-true approach for maximum species variety would be live-bait offerings suspended above or around the reefs with a cork. Adjusting for the depth of the installation to avoid snagging, live or even dead shrimp are typically not passed up by much. Depending on the particular shape of the structure, the key may be a precise cast between or along the edge of the various reefs for redfish, sheepshead and black drum, while working lures off the structures is a bit often produces the trout.



- All that may be visible at normal or elevated tide levels could be the signs warning of the presence of shoreline reef structures to local mariners. Maneuver with caution around these installations to avoid costly damage to your boat or worse.



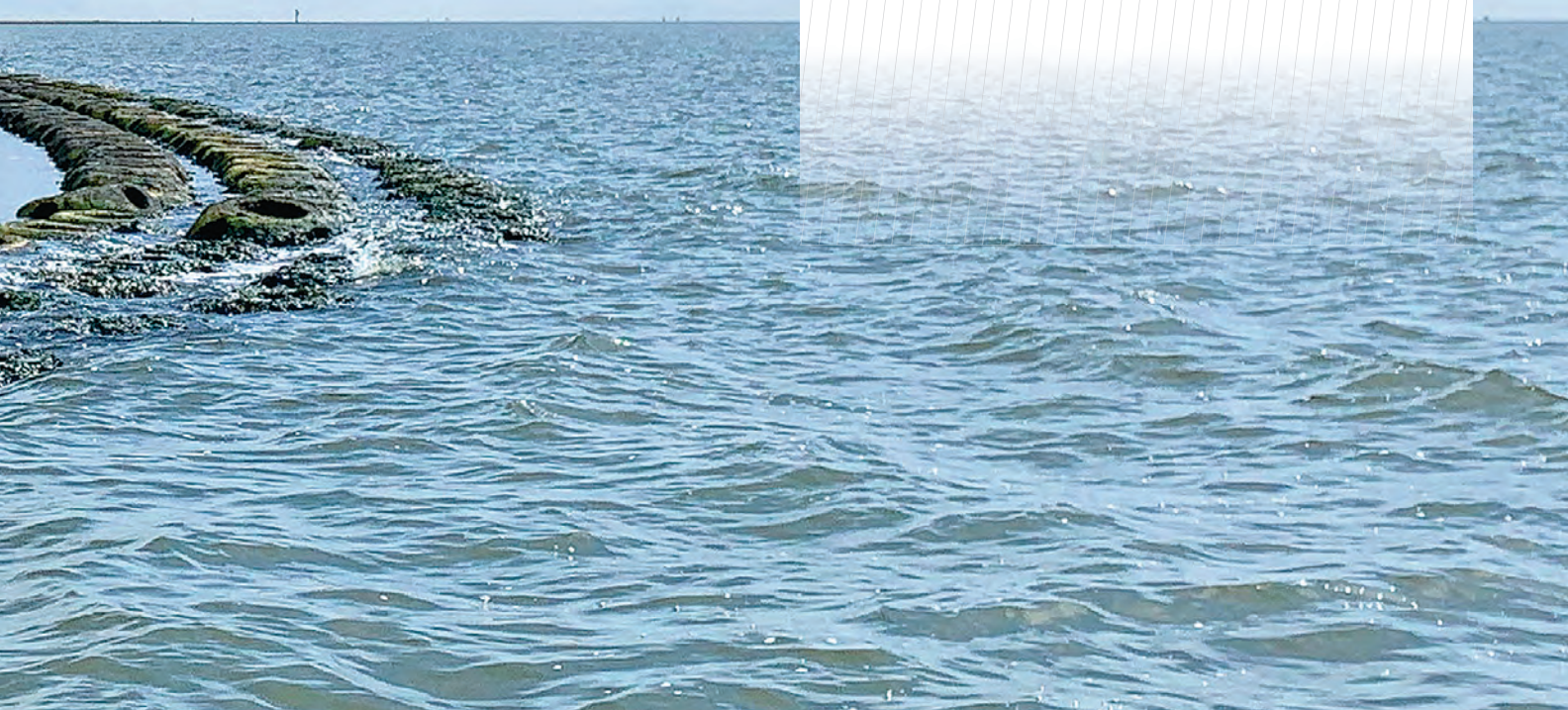
Man-made structures installed with the aim of protecting further erosion of Louisiana's shorelines are constructed of a number of different materials, from rocks to cases of oyster shells to concrete. **ABOVE:** Fishermen can mine these structures for a variety of gamefish, like this slot-sized red.

- Bring plenty of tackle. Using high-priced corks can get to be an expensive endeavor given there's so much structure to get snagged on. The same applies for terminal tackle like hooks, weights and leaders.

- As the installations tend to be highly abrasive, consider going with heavier line, as hooked fish tend to bolt straight back into the reef structures. Braided line has been invaluable for preventing breakoffs.

- Your favorite topwater plugs should be worked both parallel to the structures and over the top when submerged. Let conditions dictate the particular shape and color you tie on, but err toward the louder models in these locations.

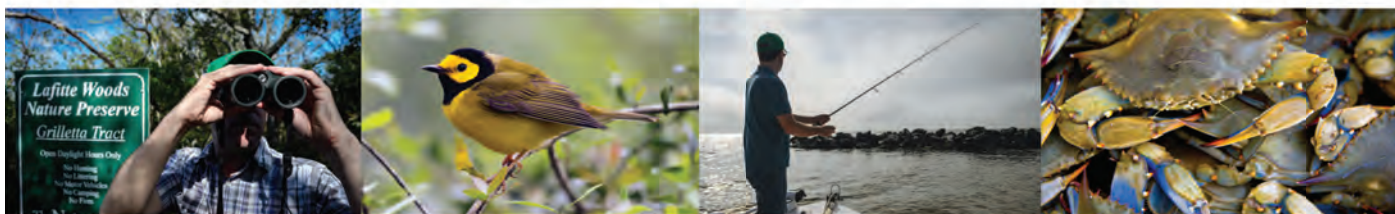
- While straight sections of the reefs are often productive, just like when fishing any other shoreline, areas to target would be points and coves, keeping an eye out for where structure segments stop and start again on a given shoreline. ■





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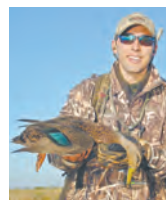
**G**iven the varieties of species often available, such structures are ideal for less-experienced anglers, who just want action of any kind and don't care to target any one species. The boat can be positioned fairly close to the reefs, so a short pitch and not a long cast is all it takes when properly anchored. You never know what might be on the other end of the line when the cork goes under.

On high-tide events, when certain structure types might be only submerged by a foot or two of water, I have a hard time not throwing topwater plugs over to the back side of the reefs and working them over the top and back to the boat. We've seen some explosive strikes from both redfish and trout ambushing the lures as they lie in wait within the structures. This approach can be very effective for those looking to up the excitement on their outing.

Such shoreline projects appear to be a critical tool for long-term plans to combat coastal erosion. With living shoreline installations, the needs of both the fish and fishermen are met, all while preventing further degradation of our fragile remaining marshes. Keep an eye out for installations coming to a marsh near you in the years to come. ■



Inshore anglers targeting artificial structures like this mini rock jetty take advantage of the structures' ability to attract both predator and prey.



**Darren Digby**, an environmental engineer and USCG licensed captain, has been hunting and fishing the marshes of Southeast Louisiana since childhood. He lives in Baton Rouge with his wife Ella and their two kids.

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## MARSH MAN MASSON

Todd Masson

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# TROUT IGNORE STRUCTURE? BETTER NOTIFY THE TRESTLES

LONG RAILROAD BRIDGE SHOWS ANGLERS EXACTLY HOW SPECKLED TROUT CAN USE A PIECE OF STRUCTURE EFFECTIVELY

**S**peckled trout aren't exactly cover-oriented. A largemouth bass can hardly pass a piling or piece of underwater riprap without tucking up next to it like it's found a new friend for life.

Even though they're more transient, redbird too relate strongly to cover.

But speckled trout? They might feel codependency with each other, but no trout is going to cling very long to underwater anomalies.

That, of course, doesn't mean the fish are entirely pelagic. Specks do use cover to their advantage, even if they don't lock tight to it.

Case in point is the railroad bridge, known colloquially as the Trestles, that spans Lake Pontchartrain, moving freight between New Orleans, Slidell and beyond.

Though trout aren't attracted to the bridge stanchions as security blankets, they do tuck behind them to hide and

ambush bait that's forced in and out of the lake by strong currents. It happens every spring and fall, and this year, it got rolling in March and has been excellent ever since.

### A BRIDGE TOO FAR?

Fishing the Trestles can be maddening, as all stretches look almost identical, but the fish will concentrate on different lengths of the bridge from one day to the next, with no apparent reason for the change. That means anglers will have to eeny-meeny-miney-mo where they start on any particular trip, and move often if the action isn't to their liking.

They'll also have to determine if the fish are on the upcurrent side of the bridge or the downcurrent side. Most often, the latter is the case, as fish hang out behind the pilings and feast on hapless prey.

But sometimes, when bait stocks are more lean, the fish will leapfrog each other to the upcurrent side to fill their

bellies before their mates beat them to it.

Plenty of anglers target Trestles trout with live shrimp on Carolina or drop-shot rigs, but soft-plastics are also effective and tend to produce bigger fish. Standard offerings are Matrix Shads on 3/8-ounce Deathgrip jigheads tied to fluorocarbon leaders or fluorocarbon main line.

Fluoro is important and sometimes downright essential. Last autumn, the water in the lake got crystal clear, and I spent a day fishing shoulder to shoulder with Capt. Justin Bowles while shooting an episode of *Marsh Man Masson*. He whacked the fish, while I caught one here and one there.



A former editor of *Louisiana Sportsman*, Todd Masson has published the *Marsh Man Masson* YouTube channel since 2017.

The only difference was Bowles had 12-pound fluoro spooled on his reel, and I had 20-pound. On my next trip, just a couple days later, I went with the lighter line and was headed home in two hours with a heavy ice chest.

Usually, spring winds and rainfall add turbidity, making light fluoro less of a necessity, but it doesn't hurt to bring a reel spooled with it.

Also in the spring, rising tides tend to be better, as they bring in clean water and fresh stocks of baitfish. Keep that in mind if you want to time your trip to maximize your chances for success.

## GO SLOW, HIT BOTTOM

First-timers to the Trestles often go home disappointed, and the biggest mistake they make is fishing too fast. It's essential to let the lure fall to the bottom after each hop. The fish are usually within a couple feet of the bottom, and anglers who don't get there won't get a bite.

Good equipment is also ultra-impor-



Photos by Todd Masson

Using fluorocarbon, as light as possible, will make a big difference in the number and quality of bites you get at the Trestles.

tant. On most days, the bites at the Trestles will be super subtle, and if you're fishing an inexpensive rod, you'll likely never feel them. If you're in the market and want a rod specifically for jigging speckled trout in deep water, go with medium-heavy power and fast action.

And don't sit on your hands. Get out there soon. May is often one of the best months at the Trestles, but the action never extends very long into June. ■

**TROUT HOTSPOTS >**



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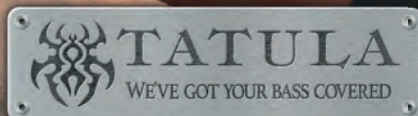
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# GUIDE EXPECTS TROUT ACTION IN GRAND ISLE TO BUST OUT IN MAY

## Look for birds, bring plenty of live shrimp

**A** By Rusty Tardo  
According to Capt. Keith "Herk" Bergeron of Pair-A-Dice Charters, trout action is fixing to really bust out in May in the Grand Isle area.

"It's really looking like we'll have a great May," he said. "This is generally our best month to fish for trout ... and this year should prove it," he said.

"The trout action is already breaking out all over the bays, so you can fish all over and do good. I suggest you get a livewell full of live shrimp before you head out, and try the water on the west side of the island like Fisherman's Bay and the Bay Jacques areas, or head to some of the islands like Queen Bess or Independence Island, or over the oyster reefs north of the

old Cigar's Marina. The reefs there were marked by poles, but just look for birds diving in the area."

Bergeron (985-860-7855) said if shrimp are present, birds will be diving and feeding on the shrimp from above, and trout will be tearing into them from below, so there will be a real feeding frenzy going on.

"If you approach the feeding birds from upwind/upcurrent and sneak in as quietly as you can, you won't spook the trout. Cast your Vudu shrimp under a cork, and you'll get hit every cast," he said. "They

Capt. Keith Bergeron caught this nice Grand Isle speckled trout on a VuDu shrimp.



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might not all be keepers, but you should find plenty that'll be legal size."

Bergeron will often take his grandkids and run along the bay side of the island, looking for birds.

"Wherever you find them, fish there," he said. "It doesn't get any simpler than that."

Bergeron said other May and early summer hotspots include familiar spots like Manila Village, Hotel Sid and St. Mary's Point.

"Dutch Island, just to the north of Grand Isle in Caminada Bay, should be productive, and the rocks on the west and south side of Fifi Island hold trout this time of year," he said. "But what I'm really looking forward to is when the big trout show up along the beaches of Elmer's Island, and that should be starting up very soon. I love fishing there with live croakers on a sliding sinker rig, casting up to the first trough along the island. I've caught some big fish that way." ■

Charlie Shaw has caught his fair share of fish on Sabine Lake. Here he is with a solid summer specimen.



## **RUN THE WALLS ON WEST SIDE OF SABINE**

Trout, reds available with the change of a lure; area is a historic producer on the lake.

**I**t By Capt. Adam Jaynes  
may seem as if the wind will never quit blowing, but calmer days are on the horizon as we creep closer to a summer pattern on Sabine Lake.

Each incoming tide bringing saltier, "trout green" water filled with ribbonfish, pogies and shrimp will have the lake busting at the seams. So many signs of new life stemming from the passing spring are an angler's delight. Just like an episode of *Blue Planet* from the Discovery Channel, new life also brings the predators.

On the west side of Sabine runs the north and south revetment walls, spanning nearly the entire shoreline. It is a well-known haunt for local fishermen, and rightly so. Both the north and south walls are easily accessible via automobile for arguably the best bank-fishing on the lake. Several boat ramps are also available for a short boat ride, including the ramp at the RV Park, causeway ramps and Sea Pony at the base of the Rainbow Bridge for fishing the walls from the boat.

### **HITTING THE WALLS**

During spring and early summer, the walls are one of the most-consistent and productive places on Sabine. Serving as something of a highway, big numbers of speckled trout and redfish travel up and down the walls, hunting for their next meal. Historically, I have always caught many more trout here than redfish; however, with the change of a lure, your redfish chances

will go up tremendously. Often, locating the trout is very easy, as they are commonly slicking here. Many anglers will travel up and down the walls in their trucks or boats, looking for slicks. Once one is located, stop and fish, then move to the next one.

### **LURES**

An assortment of lures will work, although I prefer to throw those mimicking finfish since we are often fishing slicks. MirrOdines, SheDogs and Yo-Zuri Crystal Minnows are some of my favorite hard plastics. If fishing soft plastics, I prefer something with a paddletail such as an Egret Wedgetail or a Texas Tackle Factory Killer Flats Minnow. If redfish are your target, change lures. A ¾-ounce, chrome/blue back Rat-L-Trap is the ticket, and it will still give you the opportunity to catch solid speckled trout. A brown craw KVD 1.5 square-bill crankbait will also help you hone in on the redfish, but do not expect to catch very many trout.

It is important to note that if fishing either north or south revetment walls from the bank, a Texas fishing license is required. If fishing from the boat, a Louisiana or Texas fishing license would suffice; however, Texas size and creel limits are in effect. ■

*To learn more or contact Capt. Adam Jaynes, visit [justfishsabine.com](http://justfishsabine.com).*

## PADDLES 'N PUDDLES

Chris Holmes



Chris Holmes has kayak fished in the Gulf of Mexico, the Atlantic and Pacific oceans and many places in between. He can be reached at [cholmes@att.net](mailto:cholmes@att.net).

# MAY: A KAYAK SMORGASBORD

IN LOUISIANA WATERS, EVERYTHING'S BITING

**W**hat do you want to catch? Bass? Trout? Redfish? Flounder? Catfish? Bream? Even crabs? There's no better time than now. While good kayak fishing can be had year-round in coastal Louisiana, May could be the best month for comfort and variety. Those rogue, late-April cold fronts are gone, and those scorching summer days have not yet arrived. The water's warming by the day, and the fish are active and hungry. Now is the time.

## BASS: TOP PICK, DELACROIX

Coming off of an early spring spawn, bass are off the beds and on the prowl. Grass beds that were knocked back by winter freezes are coming back, but not yet so thick that they are impenetrable. Early mornings, try working topwater frogs or weightless Texas-rigged plastics on top of and through holes in the grass mats. If you don't draw any strikes through the grass, let the frog sit in the open pockets of water and impart some subtle twitches. If you're fishing with plastics, drag the lure to the edge of the grass and slowly let it sink into the holes. You can also work spinnerbaits and weedless spoons parallel to the edges of the grass beds. If you have good balance and a stable kayak, try pitching and punching through the heavier grass to get to the bass holding beneath.

## TROUT: TOP PICK, CALCASIEU

Yes, this time of year, the specks are moving to the outside to spawn in the saltier waters near the coastline and barrier islands. Many of those areas are out of reach for kayak anglers. However, it doesn't mean that Louisiana's coastal lakes and marshes are devoid of trout. Trout can be caught in these areas year-round and a wide variety of methods put trout in the 'yak. The trout spawn kicks off with the April full moon and lasts for a few months. This year's May full moon is on the 11<sup>th</sup>. A few days before and a few days after may be your best time to catch a spawning beast. The best chance to make that happen is with a topwater lure; however, live shrimp, soft plastics, popping corks, tight-lining, trolling and fishing hard plastics are all great ways to trick a trout.

**REDS: POINTE-AUX-CHENES >**





Trout start heading out to the coast and barrier islands in late spring to spawn, but that doesn't mean you can't still find some in the coastal lakes and marshes.

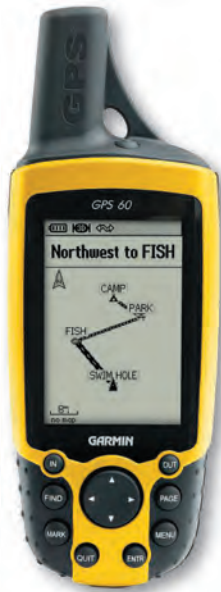
## PADDLES 'N PUDDLES

continued

### REDS: TOP PICK, POINTE-AUX-CHENES

Redfish eat almost anything and are thick in the marsh areas this time of year. One of the easiest and most-productive redfish lures is the simple, weedless gold spoon. Rigged with a small split-ring/barrel swivel to reduce line twist, catching reds on a gold spoon is as simple as casting and reeling. Live or dead shrimp under a popping cork is equally as foolproof. Rigged about 18 inches under the cork, cast near any irregular points or cuts along the shoreline or cast upcurrent and let the cork float the bait along parallel to the shore. Although nature designed redfish as bottom feeders, do not over-

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look throwing topwater plugs or small crankbaits. Reds hit topwater lures ferociously, but many times, the wake from their broad foreheads pushes the lure away as they strike. This only adds more excitement as they get fired up and may hit two or three more times before connecting.

## FLOUNDER: TOP PICK, CATFISH LAKE

Flounder have returned to the marsh this time of year. However, many reports are expressing concerns of overall population decline and that, combined with the skill necessary to specifically target them, has many kayak anglers referring to them as unicorns. Slow, shallow and deliberate is the best way to look for a flounder. The bite is distinct, with a unique “double bump” felt when a flounder hits. Their sideways mouth presents some hookset challenges, and they are notorious at shaking free just before you get them to the net. Live bait or scented plastics on a strong but light jighead are great ways to trick a flounder. Shallow areas with flat sand or mud bottoms near a current flow are where flounder like to wait and ambush as a bait comes by. Check out the corners of any pipeline canals and work or drift your baits slowly down and across them.

## CATFISH: TOP PICK-DELACROIX

This area is inundated with big blue cats but receives little direct fishing pressure. A rod and reel or setting out juglines is great sport in a kayak. Anchoring up and soaking bait on the bottom can produce some big cats. Large night crawlers or chunks of cut fish make great bait. Since this area has become more brackish, dead shrimp also works great. For even more fun, combined with a little exercise, try free-floating some jug lines for cats. Using brightly colored pool noodles for “jugs.” The fun begins as a cat starts swimming off and pulling the float under — a la Jaws. It is even more fun when multiple jugs get hooked up at the same time. The chase to retrieve the jugs in a kayak is a blast.

## BREAM: TOP PICK, CANALS, MARSH AT LAKE CATHERINÉ

Kayaks are perfect for chasing a variety of bream. Gear can be as simple as an old-school cane pole rigged with a small cork and a live worm or cricket. If you prefer casting, a light fly rod or ultralight spinning combo gets the job done. For fly fishing, tiny popping bugs that imitate spiders, bees or frogs are tough to beat. On the spinning gear, small spinners like Beetle Spins or tiny Rat-L-Traps are irresistible to hungry panfish.

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## PADDLES 'N PUDDLES

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## CRABS: TOP PICK, COASTWIDE

If you're looking for something a bit different, give kayak crabbing a try. With just a dozen or two drop nets and some chicken or turkey necks for bait, your kayak becomes a crab catching machine. Set the nets out in a uniform line and wait 15 to 20 minutes before making the first run. After that, you should be able to make repeat runs from start to finish. Keep the bait replenished as it gets washed out and eaten up. If there is a little wind or current, plan your line of nets so that you will be picking them up against the wind/current direction.

Don't miss out on the wide variety of action in May. No matter what you want to catch, this could be the best time of year. Enjoy the warm days and bright sunshine. ■

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# TURN THE

By Bobby Cleveland

# SPRING RED

**BILOXI MARSH IS A REDFISH HOTSPOT IN MAY, AFTER FISH MOVE IN, BEFORE THE HEAT MOVES THEM BACK OUT. HERE'S HOW A GULF CAPTAIN FINDS THEM AND PUTS THEM IN THE BOAT.**

# OUR FISH BOX WAS CROWDED WITH SPECKLED TROUT

by 9 a.m., proving that Capt. Kenny Shiyou had made the right call, one he pitched at us at sunrise in the calm waters of Pass Christian Harbor before we hit the Gulf on a cool May morning.

“Guys,” he said, “I know you came down here wanting to chase redfish, and if you will indulge me, I think we will have time to get a bunch of reds, but we need to hit the speckled trout for the first couple of hours. We can fill the box with specks and have plenty of time left to get on the reds.”

“All you have to tell me is what kind of reds you want to chase. Do you want to catch reds you can take home and eat, or do you want to catch reds that will try to pull you right out of the boat?”

His confidence, shared by other captains of the multi-boat operation that is Shore Thing Charters of Ocean Springs, Miss., was inspiring. We took the bait.

At 8:45, what had been an outstanding speck bite, with one bite seemingly right after another, ebbed as quickly as the tidal current. After 15 minutes without a bite, Shiyou pulled the anchors and told us to get ready for a 30-minute run.

“You want redfish? We’ll go find redfish,” he said. As he steered his boat south, deeper into the Biloxi Marsh, about as far east as you can go in Louisiana without being in Mississippi, Shiyou explained his strategy.

It was a page right out of his May playbook. “May is the time of the year (when) you really can see and feel the water beginning to warm more quickly during the course of a day,” he said. “That has an impact on fishing almost as much as the tides. It is the last month we have before it gets really tough over the summer where redfish are concerned.”



In May, the Biloxi Marsh holds whatever kind of redfish you want to target, from slot-sized keepers like this one to bulls.



**S**ummer can be brutal on redfish anglers, especially in the Mississippi Sound and connected areas. Temperatures, biting flies and gnats can be treacherous without wind, and the redfish can disappear as they seek cooler water.

May is the last, best chance to slam the slot reds until the fall, when they return and provide the best action of the year.

“That’s why May is important for guys devoted to redfish,” Shiyou said. “The keeper fish are still plentiful in the bays, the sound and the marsh. The key to it, though, is the tide. I like a falling tide to fish for reds in May unless I’m after the bigger bull reds. Then, you just need some good water movement.”

Back to the strategy.

“Speckled trout bite early, but they don’t like the heat as much,” Shiyou said. “They are spawning throughout May. They spawn at night, feed heavily at sunrise and then rest. They generally peak at sunrise, and then it slows down after 8 and it shuts down around 9. It can be tough to get a bite, and that’s when you think redfish.

“If you got a (full-day) charter, that leaves us enough time to go get the reds,” he said. “They aren’t as impacted so much by the heat as they are the tide, and that’s when we start looking for a day when the tide starts falling in mid-morning or at noon and begins emptying the ponds and drains in the marsh.”

That’s an ideal situation, Shiyou said, because it puts the slot redfish that are legal to keep and great to eat — those fish between 16 and 27 inches in Louisiana and between 18 and 30

Look for bull redfish to be stacked up along the edge of current seams or breaks around the mouths of major creeks or bigger bayous.



inches across the line in Mississippi— in a vulnerable situation.

“A falling tide pulls them out of the shallow ponds and drains toward the deeper bayous or bays,” he said. “These can be drains so shallow you can’t get a boat in or out of, coming out of lakes or ponds in the marsh that you can’t fish on a low or falling tide. Just because you can’t get into a drain doesn’t mean they can’t.

“You just start hitting drains and fishing them until you find the hot spot. Or, you just hit as many spots as you can catching one here, two there or three over there until you get the limit.”

Finding hot spots like drains — cuts that create an avenue of travel from ponds in the marsh to the main bayous — is a never-ending process for Shiyou and all other coastal captains.

**““”** *When Plan A goes wrong, you need a Plan B or Plan Bs, especially in this business.*

“I’m looking for drains that have shells, or I’m looking for a shell bed near a drain,” he said. “Those are prime grounds because bait like shrimp or small crabs stay around those shell bottoms to pick up meals hiding in the shells. The redfish come there for the shrimp, crabs or any small fish.

“The trouble is that the Gulf, the barrier islands and especially the Marsh, are constantly changing. Just because there were shells and redfish in a spot last year or just last fall doesn’t mean there will be shells or anything else that would hold redfish this year. So I’m always looking for shell beds and broken grass, even when I’m running. I never pass without checking a new spot, or at least I’m logging it into my memory so the next time I’m out, I can check it. It is amazing how many new good spots you can find, and you can’t have enough. There are a lot of days that your got-to spots may not be fishable because of condi-

Capt Kenny Shiyou likes to target slot-sized redfish on a late-morning falling tide outside of drains that empty the marsh.



tions beyond your control, like wind or tide. When Plan A goes wrong, you need a Plan B or Plan Bs, especially in this business.”

Shiyou quit talking and began pointing to a break in the bank on the right side of the bayou we were cruising through. We could shells on the bank on both sides of the cut. Current was running out the small channel into the bayou.

Within five minutes we had a fat, 22-inch redfish in the boat and another hooked up and circling. Shiyou netted the first fish and rebaited the client’s hook and was ready with the net again when a 24-inch red came to the boat. He scooped up the redfish and broke into a broad smile.

“Oh, I love it when a plan goes off perfectly,” he said. The bite continued through three more stops and until we had limits in the boat at noon. All fish were between 20 and 26 inches and destined for the grill back home.

Shiyou had more good news: “Y’all got a couple of hours left. Want to try a bull red or two?”

Well, heck yeah!

Shiyou put the big engine to work, running back down the bayou toward the open water at the edge of the marsh. He was quickly talking again, describing the plan to catch bigger reds.

“We will try to find a major point in a big body of water, like a point at the mouth of a main bayou, or just a long point extended from the marsh,” he said. “We’re looking for one with a major flow, a big current line, running around the point. When you pull up to the point, if it’s right, you’ll see the current line. There may be a color change in the water or a small weed line, but there will be something that makes that current line stick out. Big bull redfish love current and will be sitting on the edge of that current line, looking for it to bring a meal by them.”



**Bobby Cleveland** has covered sports in Mississippi for over 40 years. A native of Hattiesburg and graduate of the University of Southern Mississippi, Cleveland lives on Ross Barnett Reservoir near Jackson with his wife Pam. He can be reached at [bobbyc7754@yahoo.com](mailto:bobbyc7754@yahoo.com).

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**“We** set up on the edge; I like to use a 6- to 8-inch mullet or

white trout, or half a blue crab, top shell and all, for bait. We cast them out with a heavy sinker along the current line and either put the rod in a rod holder or just stand or sit there holding it. Big bulls are usually in schools, and when they come through, it can be entertaining. If there’s a bait in the area, they’re going to get it.”

Bull reds are fished most often purely for sport, since they aren’t that good to eat except in a courtbouillon — Cajun pronunciation cou-bi-on — and the limit is only one per person per day as part of a limit of five redfish per day.

While 20- and 30-pound bulls are the norm, fish up to 40 pounds are often caught. Bass tackle will give you a workout, but Shiyou suggests otherwise.

“We use the 3000-class reels on slot reds, but I recommend a 4000-class reel with 40-pound braid and 50-pound mono leader,” he said. “You get a 20- or 30-pound fish in that current line, it takes more



May in Biloxi Marsh and surrounding waters is a perfect time to target reds. The water is warming, but not too hot to cause fish to shut down.



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than a medium or medium-heavy trout rod to turn its head. And besides, jack crevalle are well known to run those current lines, and that's a 30-minute job on heavy gear. One thing about a jack: his last pull is just as hard as his first pull."

Shiyou left the bayou on the east end of Biloxi Marsh and turned north toward home. About a mile up the marsh, he turned left and ran to a point on the edge of the grass line. A slight change in the color where the water ran around the point on the falling tide was immediately visible. It was the kind of current line he was seeking.

"We got an hour, so let's get after them," Shiyou said, handing out pieces of a blue crab that he had broken in half. "Bait up and try to get the crab right on this side of the current break."

We managed, and he quickly added a live white trout that we had caught that morning. His cast was off the opposite side of the boat but right against the same current line. All our rods went into rod holders, we opened a few cold beverages and sat back.

It took about 30 minutes before all hell broke loose.

Our two crab-baited lines went off within a second of each other, and our heavy action spinning rods were quickly doubled over, line peeling off each reel. Shiyou was yelling at us to grab them as we flew across the boat to do just that.

As we bowed up against the two big fish, Shiyou eased his rod out of his holder and was ready when the school of fish reached his bait on the other side of the boat.

"Poor white trout," he said, "I wouldn't want to be you."

Bam! We were all hooked up, and the dance routine we did to get those redfish to the boat was both difficult and hilarious. We managed, and one by one, we released the fish without ever taking them out of the water. Our best guess was that all three were between 25 and 30 pounds.

It was work and nobody complained when Shiyou cranked the engine, pointed the bow at the reading for Pass Christian and showered down on the throttle.

Redfish in May in the Gulf? Count me in. ■

Contact Capt. Kenny Shiyou at 228-493-5735 or Shore Thing Charters at 228-342-2295 or online at [shorethingcharters.com](http://shorethingcharters.com).

“” I like to use a 6- to 8-inch mullet or white trout, or half a blue crab, top shell and all, for bait.

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Capt. Charlie Thomason takes clients to catch a whole lot of redfish around points this month.



## HOPEDALE REDS ARE ON THE MOVE IN MAY

**C** By Joel Masson  
 apt. Charlie Thomason with Bayou Charters catches gobs of redfish this month near Hopedale, and one of the keys is understanding the migration of the fish.

"The redfish will be moving from the outer bays inward, and the other big (numbers) of redfish will move from the Gulf to the coastline," he said. "They both kind of stage up. That's all due to the movement and migration of the bait."

Thomason (504-278-3474) targets the redfish on points with fast-moving water around.

"May is when the shrimp start to make their move in," he said. "As they start coming in and you start noticing there is shrimp available at the marina, you're going to start fishing more hard points with a lot of current."

"You want to fish areas that are heavy ambush spots."

Thomason also said the fish can get into other areas that anglers need to keep in mind.

"They'll get into places where you have big bodies of water and it just kind of funnels down into a pass. At the mouths of those passes, those fish will be sitting there waiting for the big droves of shrimp and mullet to get driven in," he said.

If you're an artificial bait fisherman, Thomason recommends throwing  $\frac{3}{8}$ -ounce Chatterbaits,  $\frac{1}{2}$ -ounce spoons and

shallow-running crankbaits like Mann's Baby 1-Minus, to catch redfish.

"All of those shallow-style vibration and displacement-style baits that are visual baits work very well," he said. "The Chatterbaits are going to be fished on the edge of grass because those are definite ambush-style baits."

If you're an angler who wants to put a bunch of fish in the boat, it's hard to go wrong with live shrimp. Thomason fishes them under corks, and he really favors the Versamaxx Hybrid corks.

"They work really well, especially for ambushing fish, because they make a lot of noise, and they just attract them a whole bunch," he said. "It sounds just like a fish feeding."

A crucial thing to do this time of year is to move a lot, according to Thomason. Staying in an unproductive area can really hurt your chances of a heavy ice chest.

"Don't stick in a spot very long, because the fish are going to start to school that time of year," Thomason said. "I live by the 5-cast rule, meaning five casts in the boat, not five casts per person."

"If you've got four people on the boat, it's pretty much two casts each person and roll. They are either there, or they're not. It's not like you're going to sit there and start pecking them off. Jump from point to point, and all of a sudden, you'll get on a point that has a lot of them." ■

A man wearing a tan shirt, khaki pants, a baseball cap, and sunglasses is sitting in a green and black Hobie Mirage Outback fishing kayak. He is holding a large fish in his left hand and a fishing rod in his right. The kayak is on a pond with many lily pads. The background shows a dense line of trees.

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## HUNTER OF THE MONTH

### Grady Hill

Grady Hill, 9, with his first turkey. It was killed on a hunt with his grandfather, Bruce Dodd, in West Feliciana Parish on April 3, 2021. The turkey had an 11-inch beard and 1-inch spurs. Grady had the patience to let two jakes strut in decoys and wait for this big turkey.

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# OF THE MONTH



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## ANGLER OF THE MONTH

### Mike Long

Mike Long of Ponchatoula, La., has been fishing for 20 years. He targets the Lake Pontchartrain areas, Lake Catherine, Port Sulfur and Hopedale. Mike also fresh-water fishes on the Northshore. He has a 12-foot Hobie Compass Kayak and Matrix Shad is his go-to lure.



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■ By Kinny Haddox

**BOSSIER CITY BASS PRO  
SHARES HIS FAVORITE SPOTS  
IN NORTH LOUISIANA**

**NICK 'EM AND  
STICK 'EM**

**Rising pro bass angler Nick LeBrun's story started when a couple of his uncles hooked him on fishing in the cypress studded waters of Black Lake at Campti. That's where he learned to**

**“NICK 'EM AND STICK 'EM”**

**with lures like plastic worms and Rat-L-Traps that still play a major part in his success.**

LeBrun, from Bossier City, has also learned from his competitive fishing the final step in bass fishing: letting 'em go. The sustainability of bass fishing — especially bigger bass — lies with anglers being responsible for the resource and taking care by practicing catch-and-release. LeBrun and his fellow pros know that.

“I was about 12 or 13 years old when my uncles on my dad's side took me fishing in Black Lake,” he said. “They taught me how to look for where to fish, how to worm fish and how to work a Rat-L-Trap. It was basic stuff, but by the time I was in my late teens, I was learning all I could about bass fishing and getting the itch to compete.”

In recent years, he has successfully scratched that itch, but it hasn't gone away. He has three major wins, 20 Top-10 finishes and has won more than \$400,000 on Major League Fishing tours alone. The highlight of LeBrun's career came 2 years ago, when he won the Bass Fishing League All-American on Cross Lake in his own backyard.

While he loves fishing all over the country, he still takes time to catch bass on his home lakes in northwest Louisiana, and he doesn't mind sharing some tips and techniques to make you a better fisherman here this time of year. Here's a custom tour of some of his home faves:

V&M's Flat Wild is bass pro Nick LeBrun's favorite lure for punching through grass mats.





A Bill Lewis StutterStep 5.0 is a great topwater lure to work back and forth next to cover at or slightly below the surface.

## BLACK LAKE, CAMPTI

Depending on the weather, a few fish will probably still be spawning this month. Even if the spawn is over, fish will be guarding nests, so cypress trees are a good place to start. Since the lake is full of them, you have to find the right ones. Unfortunately, there's no shortcut to that. Just go fish, and when you find an area with bass, stay with it. Trees closer to deeper water are a good place to start.

The lake also features a lot of boat docks and piers, and fish will set up on those as well, especially when holding right off the nests or in transition after the spawn late in the month.

"I love to go after fish here with a weightless, Texas-rigged V&M Chopstick," he said. "I also rig it wacky style, and sometimes when the fish want it to stay in the strike zone longer, that works well. A weightless Texas rig has a tendency to drift back toward the boat quicker. I also like to use a Hayabusa 959 wide-gap hook, because it lets me pull that lure through the water straight without twisting, and it hooks fish really good."

Favorite colors are black/blue or green pumpkin/blue. If fish aren't hitting the sinking plastic, LeBrun will also try a Spro popping frog. He likes popping-style frogs because they stay stationary better and the fish love the pop.

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## CADDO LAKE, MOORINGSPOUT

If you can find patches of hydrilla growing about 6 inches to a foot off the bottom in 3 or 4 feet of water on Caddo, that's where you need to start for May largemouth, LeBrun said. The big mommas love the grass, and that's where they lay up. Look for spots where it's not too thick. Of course, cypress trees also produce, and if you find the two mixed, that's a good spot, too.

"Either look at a map or go by your experience and try to find areas that won't have much current this time of year if the lake is up," he said. "They don't like the current anywhere near the spawn. I'll start with a V&M Pacemaker Pulse swim jig because I can cover a lot of water and find fish quicker. The white swim jig is a killer. I also like the 3/8-ounce size, because it keeps the bait up in the water column, and when the fish are on the trees, you are more likely to get bit. They also love the Chopstick here, too, and there's a black and orange color that the fish just love. I don't know why, but sometimes it's the best bite of all."

One caution about Caddo. It does have a lot of "dead" water. Don't get caught looking at the scenery and fish for hours without finding fish because it all looks good. Focus on areas where you do get bites or see fish on your electronics, he said.



## RED RIVER, SHREVEPORT/BOSSIER

There was a time when the Red River would have been tops on this list, but since the 2016 floods, fishing hasn't been the same on the massive river system.

"In May, focus on the oxbow lakes," LeBrun said. "They used to be chock full of bass, but now you really have to hunt. The main river doesn't really come into play until it clears up in the early summer. You are likely to catch fish around any of the structure in the river lakes, but one thing I like to look for is scattered mats of hyacinth. There aren't near as many as there used to be, but if you can find those, you can catch fish. If there's



Cypress trees can be great targets for bass fishermen at Black Lake and Caddo Lake. ABOVE: Nick LeBrun likes to bounce a Bill Lewis SB-57 crankbait off dock posts on Cypress Lake.

enough water under the mats to sink a bait, there's enough water to catch a fish."

Having the right gear to punch the mats is a must, he said. His favorite is a 7-foot-6, heavy action Fitzgerald Titan HD baitcasting rod with a Fitzgerald VLD10 reel spooled with 50-pound Sunline braid. He uses V&M Flat Wild lures rigged Texas-style on a Hayabusa 5/0 hook.

The shad spawn has a tendency to go off a little early on the Red, and if that happens, look for points and spots where the shad are schooling. The fish won't be far away.

## CYPRESS LAKE, BENTON

Cypress Lake and its sister lake, Black Lake, are almost in LeBrun's backyard, and he loves to fish them. While the fish aren't as big as in some lakes, numbers can make up for it. And fish may be anywhere this time of year.

"There are a lot of boat docks, seawalls and little patches of reeds that all hold fish," he said. "Cypress is basically a recreational lake, with very little other visible structure. In the spring, there isn't a lot of pressure, but on into warmer weather, recreational boaters get pretty active."

This is another lake where LeBrun likes a bladed swim jig and anything shad colored, white or white/chartreuse.

"Just stay on the bank, put your trolling motor on high and make as many casts toward the cover as you can," he said. "When you start catching them, slow down and work it a little more carefully. And don't forget to hit the ends of the docks later in the day. I love to throw a Bill Lewis SB-57 crankbait and bounce it off the dock posts. Those post-spawners just can't resist that." ■



Nick LeBrun cut his teeth fishing around cypress trees in Black Lake with a Rat-L-Trap like this one.

## DON'T GET 'HUNG UP' ➤



**Kinny Haddox** has been writing magazine and newspaper articles about the outdoors in Louisiana for 45 years. He publishes a daily website, [lakedarbonnelife.com](http://lakedarbonnelife.com) and is a member of the Louisiana Chapter of the Outdoor Legends Hall of Fame. He and his wife, DiAnne, live in West Monroe.

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# LESSON FROM THE TOUR: DON'T GET 'HUNG UP'

If you're not getting bit this month, don't waste time in one area; go looking elsewhere for active fish.



That doesn't mean don't get your fishing lure snagged in a bush. Nope.

It means when the fish aren't biting in a certain spot, don't get hung up fishing there too long just because you caught them there last year or last week. That's one of the biggest lessons that Nick LeBrun learned by fishing tournaments he said is important for everyday fishing as well.

"Especially in the spring, if you aren't getting bit, then frankly, you are probably not around the fish," he said. "There are a few weeks when they are a little bit hard to catch post-spawn, but this time of year, you don't have to have a superior skill level to catch fish unless something out of the ordinary happens.

"One of the best pieces of advice I can give is to tell fishermen to be more comfortable making moves and trying different things."

That doesn't mean giving up on what you know, and if you have a spot you just know fish are on, check back on it at another time, but don't hang your hat on it, he said.

"Another thing that I just didn't do much around home was fish topwater much in spring, and I've learned that is a mistake," he said. "The good thing about topwater this time of year is that when you catch one, it's usually going to be a big one."

One bait that doesn't always catch fishermen's attention in the tackle shop that catches fish this time of year almost anywhere is the Bill Lewis StutterStep 5.0. The odd-looking lure gets its name from its tendency to cut at a sharp 90-degree angle when walked, stuttering back and forth next to cover, a step at a time. It can also be "wobble-waked" on the surface with a slow-to-medium, buzzbait style retrieve; or "tail-wagged" with light twitches of your rod tip. ■

## LURE REVIEW >

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## LURE REVIEW

Don Shoopman

# THE RACKET BLADE

STANLEY'S ENTRY INTO THE BLADED JIG MARKET IS A ROCKET WITH PLENTY OF RACKET ATTACHED

This 2-pound fish bit on a thumping, rattling Racket Jig that lived up to its name the first week of March at Lake Fausse Pointe. The Stanley Jigs' product designed by Lonnie Stanley hit the market a few months ago.

One of the most-talented and successful artificial lure designers since the 1980s remembers the trials and tribulations associated with designing Stanley Jigs' Racket Blade.

Texan Lonnie Stanley knew what he wanted from a bladed jig. It took him a while, but his persistence paid off.

"I've been playing with this thing for almost three years. It wouldn't work right," Stanley said.

He tweaked it and tweaked it and did some more tweaking until he was satisfied with its performance, i.e., ability to trigger bites. Stanley, 75, and others fished with prototypes for a year or so before it was deemed worthy of reaching the market.

"We've had this for a year. We've been

testing it. We're excited about it. It does catch fish," Stanley said.

Racket Blades were distributed for a few months this year to stores around Lake Sam Rayburn and Toledo Bend, Stanley said. If bass anglers want to get their hands on one more quickly, go to [www.fishstanley.com](http://www.fishstanley.com).

"It's a 'big fish' bait, but you can also catch a limit on it," Stanley said. "You can catch a 1-pounder on it and an 8-pounder on it," plus everything in between.

Stanley's heaviest bass with his new bladed jig was a 9.8-pound hawg from a private pond in east Texas. A native of Zavalia, Texas, he also has caught several 7-pound class bass on it at Lake Sam Rayburn and Toledo Bend. Other bragging-size bass were boated by others who tied on the prototypes.

Stanley, whose business is based in Huntington, Texas, got an immediate thumbs-up on the design early on in the process from his longtime friend and business partner, John Hale, another veteran east Texas angler in his late 70s.

## SOME EXTRA RACKET

What separates the Racket Blade is a short, wire harness between the familiar Stanley spinnerbait head and the steel or brass blade, which are available in different colors. That blade causes the bladed jig to thump, thump, thump, as others do, but look closer, and there are two silver beads — one smaller than the other — on the wire going to the eye for the line tie that clack on the blade as it vibrates up and down on the retrieve.

"It rattles as it comes through the water. It flashes like a spinnerbait and has the noise and vibration of a (Rat-L-)



Stanley Jigs Racket Blade



Don Shoopman fishes for freshwater and saltwater species mostly in and around the Atchafalaya Basin and Vermilion Bay. He moved to the Sportsman's Paradise in 1976, and he and his wife June live in New Iberia. They have two grown sons.

Trap,” said Stanley, whose company celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2019.

The rattling capability wasn’t planned, he confided. It was a pleasant surprise.

“That’s an action of the good Lord,” he said, chuckling.

Racket Blades are available in 3/8-, 1/2- and 3/4-ounce models. The hand-tied silicone skirts, the company’s staple since the 1980s, are available in 16 colors.

Racket Blades are armed with a 4/0 Mustad Needlepoint hook on the 3/8-ounce model and 5/0 Mustad Needlepoint hooks on the 1/2- and 3/4-ounce models.

Stanley, a five-time Bassmaster Classic qualifier, is oh-so proud of another quality feature — a twin titanium alloy wire weedguard. Bass anglers have the choice of models with or without the weedguard. Like Stanley said, some bassers who fish mostly around rocks feel like they don’t need them, but those who target bass in heavy cover and vegetation appreciate its fishability.

Each Racket Blade also comes with a solid, soft-plastic trailer keeper.

Stanley designed his pet project so that it would get the desired results whether fishing for largemouth bass, smallmouth bass or even redfish.

“Everybody’s catching the heck out of fish on it,” he said. ■

*For more information about the Racket Blade and other Hale Lures/Stanley Jigs products, call 936-876-5713 or go to [www.fish-stanley.com](http://www.fish-stanley.com).*

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# COMPETITIVE DRIVE IS KEY TO FISHING SUCCESS FOR ULL BASS TEAM MEMBER

PINHO, WHO FOUNDED PATTERSON H.S. BASS TEAM, QUALIFIED FOR THREE-STRAIGHT HIGH SCHOOL NATIONAL TOURNAMENTS

**L**ike an ace pitcher who relies on a blazing fastball and wicked slider but has other “out” pitches at his command, Patterson’s Hayden Pinho does more than rely on a bladed jig and spinnerbait when he fishes for bass.

Pinho, a 21-year-old college bass angler, has an assortment of techniques he relies on to put bass in the boat from the Atchafalaya Basin to Toledo Bend to Kentucky Lake. Competition, he said, brings out the best in him as he adds to his pitch selection.

“Around (home), I’m flipping or throwing Chatterbaits or spinnerbaits. Traveling around, you kind of have to be good with everything,” said Pinho, a junior at Louisiana-Lafayette who has fished on the collegiate level since he was a freshman on the

By Don Shoopman



Hayden Pinho of ULL shows off two of the bass he caught during a tournament at Toledo Bend in 2020.



Hayden Pinho (right) and his brother, Hunter, flank their father and boat captain, Hal Pinho Jr., after winning the Mississippi vs. Louisiana Battle out of Lake End Park at Lake Palourde. The Pinho brothers teamed up on the Patterson High School fishing team.

Ragin’ Cajun bass fishing team. A third-place finish at a Texas college state tournament at Lake Sam Rayburn stands as his best effort at ULL.

Coming up, Pinho, who’s majoring in industrial technology, has a handful of Major League Fishing collegiate tournaments on tap and a BoatUS Collegiate Bass Fishing Series Championship on May 26-27 at Lake Murray, S.C. He’s ready.

Accomplished as a high-school and collegiate angler, he thrives on his competitive drive.

“To be honest with you, I think competition is always making myself want to be better,” he said.

Tournament fishing is in Pinho’s wheelhouse now as much or more as it was when he fished competitively at Patterson High School. To be sure, he always has loved to fish.

## AN EARLY START

“I’ve been in a boat since I was, like, 3 years old,” he said. “I want to say when I was 11 or 12, I started bass fishing. My dad was a saltwater fishermen for a while. We went back to fishing bass and sac-a-lait, and we’ve been doing that ever since.”

Pinho credits his father, Hal Pinho Jr., and his grandfather, Hal-sema Pinho of Calumet, for much of his fishing success.

“(My father) means everything. Everything I know is either what I learned from him or fishing with my grandpa. He fished with us a long time,” Hayden Pinto said.

One of the most-beneficial lessons was never to be afraid to change from what you know to try to catch a fish. In other words, think outside the box.

“Sometimes it works out for the best,” he said.

Pinho’s father served as boat captain for his son in high school and enjoys being his tournament partner in local and regional tournaments. Their latest payday together was March 7 in the Media Bass tournament out of Doiron’s Landing, where their five bass weighed 16 pounds for a fourth-place finish and \$1,000.

## IF AT FIRST YOU DON’T SUCCEED

Pinho was a trailblazer for high-school bass fishing in St. Mary Parish. As a freshman, he tried to start a team at Patterson High

School but found no interest. He refused to give up.

"Early my sophomore year, I went, and they (school officials) gave me the go-ahead," he said. "It all took off from there."

Pinho didn't just chase bass in high school. He played baseball and competed in track and field for the Lumberjacks.

Pinho can look back, proudly, at qualifying for national championship tournaments all three years he fished at Patterson. Pinho's first year of high-school bass fishing was an especially rewarding one. He was the circuit's Angler of the Year in 2015-16 as a sophomore and qualified with Ian Doucet for nationals.

Hayden Pinho and his younger brother, Hunter, teamed up to finish second with 12.83 pounds in the May 2017 Louisiana High School B.A.S.S. Nation state tournament out of Stephenville. That qualified them for the B.A.S.S. high school national tournament the next month at Kentucky Lake in Tennessee.

The Pinho brothers qualified for nationals again in Hayden's senior year, finishing seventh out of 171 teams on the Calcasieu River, an 11th-place finish out of 222 teams in the Atchafalaya Basin and a 20th-place finish out of 155 teams in the state tournament at Toledo Bend. They also won a 30-team Louisiana vs. Mississippi tournament.

## POST-COLLEGE GOALS

Tournament fishing after college is on Pinho's mind, naturally.

"I guess I'd want to be on the (Bassmaster) Elites, start in the Opens and eventually make it to the top," he said.

Pinho urges high school students who love to fish for bass to get involved in the sport through one or more of the organizations.

"Without a doubt, 100%," he said. "It's one of the best experiences you'll ever get — travel around the state and country and meet so many people who have the same passion for it as you do." ■

**TOLEDO BEND,  
BASS HOTSPOTS >**

**“** I've been in a boat since I was, like, 3 years old. I want to say when I was 11 or 12, I started bass fishing. My dad was a saltwater fishermen for a while. We went back to fishing bass and sac-a-lait, and we've been doing that ever since.



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# IT'S FROG TIME AT TOLEDO BEND

Return of grass, TPWD plans, are exciting

**T** By John Dean  
here is grass growing in more places as spring arrives, mostly in the drains, which, by itself, would be the biggest and best news in years for Toledo Bend.

There is even greater news about the grass situation on this great lake bordering Louisiana and Texas. One of my good friends, George Herr, and another veteran local bass angler, Greg Procell, attended a meeting with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department earlier this month, then gave me an ultra-encouraging report from the department's new aquatic vegetation leader.

It's been reported that there will be a halt to spraying this spring anywhere south of Tenaha Creek. Word is, TPWD also plans to determine exactly what happened so many years ago to cause the loss of grass that significantly knocked down bass-fishing success up and down the lake. There has been talk that, in addition to spraying of grass by the department, fertilizer applied after clear-cutting practices in the woods may have mixed with runoff into the lake and downstream from there.

Reports indicate TPWD also plans to plant aquatic vegetation plots in some strategic areas of the lake, and from what I understand, fence them in as tests. That shows how serious they are about getting the lake on the road to recovery. I and so many others are so ready to get this lake straightened out.

Mother Nature seems to be doing her part. Grass is coming back and growing, and that's very, very promising. Wherever I'm fishing in and around drains, I'm seeing it: a mix of hydrilla and coontail growing tall and near the surface, even on it. It's great seeing the grass get a grip, a stronghold. And it's only going to get taller with warmer water temperatures due to increased hours of sunlight in late spring.

Warmer water in May will be the key to grass growing and the

Chase Guidry of Dallas grips a nice-sized bass caught on a Neko-rigged Senko during a recent change in the weather while fishing with John Dean at Toledo Bend.



bass bite. Sure, many bass will be in post-spawn and have left the shallows, but those post-spawners will return in a hurry because bream and shad will spawn in the shallows — particularly in and around any peppergrass you find — starting late April and May.

To me, that's frog time. Bass can't resist a plastic frog, especially the Ribbit and Stanley Top Toad. I can throw them all-day long.

It'll be a fun time; it'll be frog time, topwater time in 3- to 5-foot depths as water temperatures climb out of the 70s and into the 80s. Chartreuse/blue and watermelon/red are two of my favorite colors. Any color that imitates bream or shad should trigger bites.

Of course, since bass don't all spawn at the same time, traditional spawning tactics will pick off a lot of bass. Keep the Flukes, Senkos and Neko rigs handy, as well as buzzbaits, lipless crankbaits and bladed jigs like Delta's Thunder Jig. Those will all be in play, believe me. Keep in mind, Carolina- and Neko-rigged Flukes and Senkos can be hard to beat.

The morning bite should get better and better. The early morning hours that were slow earlier in spring will pick up and be consistent from sunrise to sunset this month. ■

*For information about guided fishing trips on Toledo Bend with John Dean, call 936-404-7688.*



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# FIND GREEN WATER, FIND VERRET BASS

## Crochet points to moving water, shad spawn

**M** By Don Shoopman  
oving water. Shad spawn. Cypress trees.

Those phrases are magnets to bass in the area that bass pro Cliff Crochet loves to fish in May. That's why he'll point the bow of his bass boat to the east side of the East Atchafalaya Basin Protection Levee, the Stephenville side, to Lake Verret, or farther south to Grassy Lake — or even farther south to Lake Palourde.

Lake Verret, however, is his first choice, and not because it's close to his home in Pierre Part. It's because it's the place to be during the first weeks after post-spawn.

"Mid-May to June, I'm talking shad spawn. The fish are out of post-spawn going into summer stuff," Crochet said. "I'm going to Lake Verret. That's my personal preference, but all three are good in some strategic areas of the lake. They have moving water. Pierre Part Bay pumps water into the north end of Verret, then it's pulled south to Grassy Lake," and eventually into Lake Palourde, he pointed out.

"Those bayous with moving water set up the shad," he said.

It's prime time to target cypress trees on long points, as well as sloughs, lily pads and duckweed (aka duckweed), he said. He'll look for "good, solid green water — that good green water with about a foot of visibility."

Crochet relies primarily on two artificial lures to trigger bites around the cypress trees, sloughs and lily pads.

"Of course I'm going with a Crusher Lures Cliff Crochet Petite double-bladed spinnerbait, probably ½-ounce. It's a compact spinnerbait, something nice and easy," he said, noting Humdinger spinnerbaits also fit the bill.

His namesake spinnerbait model with a gold Indiana and a chrome Colorado blade is his favorite for Lake Verret. In green water, try a chartreuse blade, because shad give off a somewhat chartreuse glow in water of that color.

Crochet also throws one of his favorite square-bill crankbaits, a Bill Lewis Lures SB-57.

"I throw it on big line, like 20, because I'm dealing with heavy cover. Take advantage of everything to get away with bigger line," he said.

Crochet's color preference for the crankbait is Tennessee shad. He recommends any shad colors.

Crochet has a special soft plastic ready if he finds what he calls the perfect layer of duckweed on the water. That's when he breaks out the plastic frog, probably the new Snag



Bass can be caught in May on spinnerbaits and crankbaits from Lake Verret to Lake Palourde, according to bass pro Cliff Crochet of Pierre Part. The shad spawn comes into play big time.

Photo courtesy Cliff Crochet

Proof Phat Frog, more than likely a black model.

"Yeah. One more thing that gets into play that time of year is duckweed. It becomes a major player. How do you know the 'best' stuff? Real fine duckweed can be hard to find. The good stuff you can run a spinnerbait under" without the duckweed fouling the line or the spinnerbait, he said. When he comes across the best stuff, he works that plastic frog across it.

Much of the time in May, morning hours are when Crochet gets most of the bites, because that's when shad seem to be most active. Later in the day, when the activity slows, it can signal a time to offer bass a small soft plastic, like a Net Bait Baby Paca-Craw.

Crochet said he throws the hollow-bodied soft plastic on 17-pound Seaguar fluorocarbon. ■

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**Bill Lewis**

**#BillLewisFishing**



Photos by Keith Lusher Jr.

## QUANTITY OVER QUALITY ON EAST PEARL RIVER IN MAY

**T** By Keith Lusher Jr.  
he Pearl River Delta is a vast area, encompassing more than 40 square miles. Fortunately for bass fisherman Eric Ciko of Slidell, he only needs to go a couple minutes from the launch to find fast bass action in the marsh.

Ciko fishes south of the East Pearl River launch on Highway 90, and he says that in May, it's all about quantity over quality.

Frog baits are great on the East Pearl River when bass are in a post-spawn mood.



"I've had days where I can catch 60 to 70 bass in one of these canals in the marsh," Ciko said. "Now, these fish aren't going to be tournament-winning fish, but fry them up, and you can't tell the difference in a 12-inch bass and a bream."

While the average fish ranges from 12 to 14 inches, Ciko said he usually is able to put at least one or two bigger fish, from 3 to 5 pounds, in the boat each trip.

## PAYBACK TIME

The post-spawn funk is nearing an end, and bass are starting to get back into a more-regular feeding pattern. Ciko is still seeing spawning bream in the shallows, and it's time for payback.

"All through the bass spawn, these bream are eating the bass fry," he said. "Now, it's time for payback as the bass are going into feeding mode, and the bream are still bedding and guarding their fry."

The arctic blast in late February seems to have pushed the bass spawn back a few weeks, and the bream spawn should lag into May. This is the perfect opportunity for hungry bass to take advantage of bedding bream.

Proof of this comes with the color of lures Ciko has been having success with.

"The bass are chewing on anything that matches the color of a bream," he said.



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**EAST PEARL RIVER** continued >

Ciko's go-to bait for marsh bass in May is a 5-inch Senko, rigged weightless on a 4/0 Gamakatsu round-bend, offset hook. He said he has a higher hook-up ratio using the round-bend over a wide-gap hook.

If you don't have any Senkos in bluegill colors, Ciko finds Junebug is a close-enough match to spawning bream in the tannin-colored waters.

Another top choice of Ciko's is a hollow-bodied frog like a Booyah Pad Crasher Jr. in bream color.

"Believe it or not, they make bream-colored frogs," he said. "Anything with a mixture of orange, purple, green and blue will work."

**FLUORO WINS OUT**

When using a Senko, Ciko's line of choice is fluorocarbon. He uses 14-pound line, which allows the plastic to have a more natural movement.

"I find that the fluorocarbon lets the baits sink more naturally after the pop," Ciko said. "I can work it fast over the grass to try and get a reaction bite, then stop it on the edge and let it fall."

The turbulent East Pearl is known for its muddy water, but as it starts to clear in those backwater canals, fluorocarbon becomes more important for drawing strikes. For the hollow-bodied frog Ciko prefers braid.

"On topwater baits, line visibility doesn't matter, plus, braid floats so it helps you get more action out of your frog," he said.

**TECHNIQUE**

Because the river feeds into Lake Borgne, it makes fishing the area a challenge with tides coming into effect. Ciko's favorite tide is a hard,

**““”** *I find that the fluorocarbon lets the baits sink more naturally after the pop. I can work it fast over the grass to try and get a reaction bite, then stop it on the edge and let it fall.*

falling tide, because it moves the bait down the canals, and as the tide falls, the canals start to clear up.

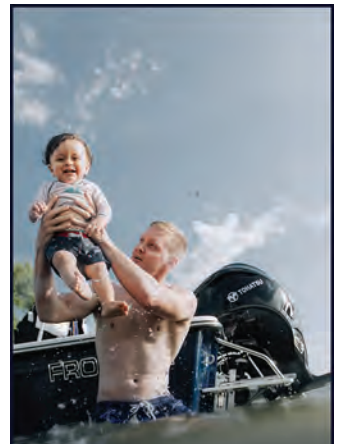
With the submerged grass that lines the canals comes the perfect ambush points for hungry bass recovering from the spawn.

"These bass will come and sit in the grass that runs along the shoreline," Ciko said. "Then when the current forces the baitfish down the canal they'll jet out and slam them then go right back into the grass."

**DIVIDING LINE**

The East Pearl River serves as the border between Louisiana and Mississippi. Ciko reminds fishermen to be mindful of the border and remember you are technically fishing in Mississippi when you're on the eastern side of the river. Ciko carries Louisiana and a Mississippi fishing licenses but said it's worth it.

"With all the fish I catch on the Mississippi side, it's well worth the cost," he said. ■



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## SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Brian Cope



Angler Drew Gregory was targeting largemouth bass when this longnose gar hit a spinnerbait in the tailrace below a dam, a common area for this species to search for prey.

# SPECIES SPOTLIGHT: LONGNOSE GAR

COMMON ACROSS NORTH AMERICA, LONGNOSE GAR ARE LONG, SKINNY PREDATORS

Photo by Brian Cope

**T**he longnose gar, *Lepisosteus osseus*, is one of the most pre-historic fish swimming in North American waters. It is native to much of the United States, and it has been around for 100 million years.

Longnose gar are common in all types of water throughout the Southeast and are very adaptable. Fisheries biologists believe longnose gar prefer the calmest waters they can find, but they will venture into swiftly moving water in search

of prey. Rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, swamps and drainage ditches are all home to longnose gar.

These fish are one of five subspecies of gar that live in the U.S. The longnose gar, as its name implies, has the longest nose and also the skinniest. It resembles a long beak more so than a nose or mouth. The species is sometimes referred to as needlenose gar. A longnose gar's nose is more than twice as long as the rest of its head.

The color of these fish varies widely. Usually olive brown or green with dark spots across its body, some longnose gar are all silver, and others are solid black.



**Brian Cope** of Borden, S.C., is a retired Air Force combat communications technician. He has a B.A. in English Literature from the University of South Carolina and has been writing about the outdoors since 2006. He's spent half his life hunting and fishing. The rest, he said, has been wasted.

A longnose gar's snout is more than twice as long as the rest of its head, meaning it's well-named.

## NEEDLE TEETH

The fish's long mouth is full of small, sharp teeth, which the fish uses to impale prey. They then toss the prey around until they can swallow it head-first. Their diet is mainly small fish. They will eat vegetation at times.

Longnose gar can use their swim bladders as lungs, gulping for oxygen above the surface when in very shallow water or water with poor or low oxygen levels. They have been known to live for more than 24 hours completely out of water.

Spawning takes place in the spring, mainly May and early June. When spawning, a female is surrounded by several males in shallow water. The males circle the female, often splashing violently. In a single spawning season, one female can release up to 77,000 eggs.

Longnose gar are often confused with shortnose gar, alligator gar and spotted gar. They have very little food value, although a small but dedicated number of anglers swear the meat is sweet and tasty when cleaned and cooked properly.

## A HOOK IS UNNECESSARY

They are rarely targeted by anglers, but some who often encounter them will tie a short piece of frayed rope onto a hookless fishing line just for fun, as in "Watch me catch this



Photo by Dan Kibler

fish without a hook." Mistaking it for a meal, the gar will slash its mouth at the rope, entangling its small teeth.

The Louisiana state record longnose gar weighed 16.04 pounds. Felix Kuntz III caught the fish in August 2018 at Bonnet Carré Spillway. The Mississippi state record weighed 48 pounds, 1 ounce. Don Henson caught this fish, which is also the world record for the species, at Sardis Reservoir Spillway in September 2016. ■

An advertisement for Evinrude Key West boats. The background is a photograph of a white Key West boat with two people fishing on the water. The boat has 'KEY WEST' and 'Kw' logos. A large yellow tag on the left says 'EVINRUDE SAVINGS SALES EVENT Through April 30, 2021'. A white banner across the middle says '3-YEAR COVERAGE & UP TO \$2000 REBATE\*\*'. At the bottom, there is contact information and the H&H Marine logo.

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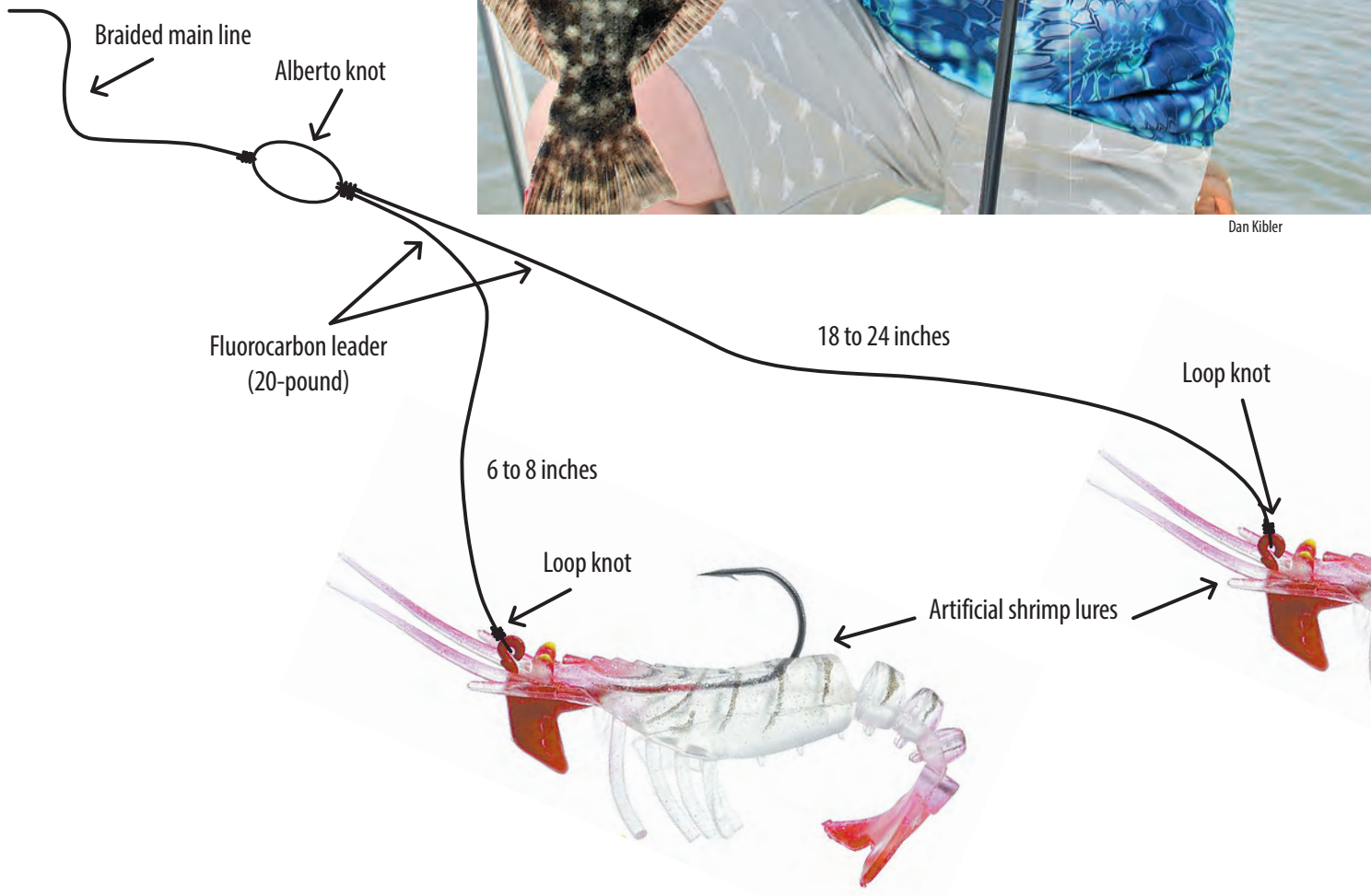
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# A TANDEM RIG FOR FLOUNDER

**G** By Jeff Burleson  
uide Brandon Huskins loves catching flounder as much as anything else, and while he loves to catch them on live bait, his favorite method by far is to fish artificial shrimp on a tandem rig. "My secret for catching flounder all-year long is my tandem-rigged bait. I rig two of the same lures on fluorocarbon line staggered 3 or 4 inches apart," he said. "When the



Dan Kibler



first comes across, it gets their attention, and then they will hit the second one as it appears in front of them. You can cover a lot of ground fast, and you will get more strikes and put more fish in the boat by using this method."

Huskins starts with braid on his reel. He takes a long piece of fluorocarbon, leaving an extra-long tag end, and ties it to the braid with an Alberto knot. He cuts it down to an 18- to 24-inch main leader and a 6- to 8-inch leader made from the tag end. To both, he uses loop knots to tie to jigheads and VuDu Shrimp.

"Flounder will stage up along creek mouths to catch mullet and "I like to drift with the tide along the narrow creeks and channels, bouncing Vudu Shrimp along the bottom," he said. "You don't miss as many fish with the shrimp, and you can also cover a lot of ground by using artificial lures. Flounder will not turn down a shrimp fluttering along the bottom, either." ■

**OPPOSITE:** Flounder are an often-overlooked inshore saltwater species, but they're plenty worth of attention. A tandem-shrimp rig (bottom) does the trick.



**““”** *My secret for catching flounder all year-long is my tandem-rigged bait. When the first comes across, it gets their attention, and then they will hit the second one as it appears in front of them.*

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# TIPS TO PRESERVE FISH FOR MOUNTING

**Y**ou feel a tug on the line, your rod is bending and you know you have a fish on. As you are struggling to reel it in, you know you have “the big one.” Your heart is beating, and you are sweating profusely, hoping the line doesn’t break and lets your trophy fish gets away. You are already planning the perfect spot to hang it on the wall.

There is nothing worse than an angler ruining their “trophy” because it was not handled properly. It is imperative that you handle the fish with care from the time you reel it in.

Larry Matherne, owner of DeeDee’s Taxidermy in Barataria (504-235-32180), offers tips for preserving a fish for mounting:

- **Photograph quickly.** The first thing you should do is take pictures to capture all those little details of the fish, including the patterns on the fins and its original color. Once the fish is out of the water, the fish’s skin color changes quickly. Try not to handle the fish too much to prevent damage to the scales.

- **Tale of the tape.** Take a few measurements, because you never know if

something goes wrong. A taxidermist can create an accurate replica, if need be. The first measurement will be the length, from the nose to the tail. The next measurement will be the girth. Wrap the tape measure around the fattiest part of the fish.

- **Cool and wet.** Get the fish on ice as soon as you can to delay the decaying process. Keep it in a separate ice chest from other fish to eliminate any damage to the skin.

It is crucial to keep the fish as wet as possible. Most people think you should wrap the fish in newspaper or brown paper bags, but that will draw moisture from the fish causing it to freezer burn.

- **Wrap it up.** As soon as you get home, wrap a paper towel around the fish, starting at the middle of the fish’s body. Place the paper towel under the fins to keep it them away from the skin. If the fins are against the skin, it will cause discoloration.

Take more paper towels and wrap the entire fish completely. Make sure the fins are laid out nicely.

- **Bag it.** Run water over the fish while it’s wrapped in paper towels and place it



**TOP:** Part of a taxidermist’s job is to duplicate the colors of the fish when it was still swimming. **ABOVE:** Care taken between the time a fish is caught and taken to a taxidermist can help or hinder the making of a top-drawer mount.

in an air-tight, plastic bag. The fish must stay wet while freezing to lock everything in and keep it moist. The ice will protect the fins from breaking off.

• **Details, details.** Don't forget to write what type of fish it is and the date it was caught on the bag, because the last thing you want to do is to accidentally throw it out when you clean out the freezer.

Matherne said fish can stay preserved for about 2 to 3 years in the freezer.

The process of mounting the fish can take 4 to 5 weeks. This includes drying out the skin, fish tanning and painting. The price usually runs about \$12.00 per inch.

But before you leave your trophy in the hands of just anyone, ask how many years' experience they have and ask to see pictures of their work. Matherne has been in the taxidermy business for 35 years.

Taxidermy is an art form done with great precision. When fish skin dries, most of the color disappears, leaving only brownish spots. The taxidermist must totally recreate the colors of the skin. Fish taxidermists are outstanding artists as well. They must have the ability to draw, paint, mix colors and sculpt.

Preserving the fish properly with a skilled taxidermist can be the difference of a great mount or a mediocre one. ■



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# 5 GIFT IDEAS FOR THE OUTDOORS-LOVING MOTHER

**W** By Will Martin  
With Mother's Day right around the corner, we thought it would be helpful to ask our friends at Puglia's Sporting Goods in Metairie for great gift ideas for the outdoors-loving mothers in our lives.

There is nothing worse than last-minute shopping; it's stressful, and your choices are limited. This Mother's Day, don't be that dope, panic-buying on Saturday night or worse, Sunday morning. Whether you are shopping for your mother, your wife or your girlfriend — or any combination of the three — no mother deserves to feel like an afterthought on her special day.

Here's the list the people at Puglia's came up with:



## 1 GRUNDÉNS WOMEN'S DECK BOSS ANKLE BOOTS

The Deck Boss collection was designed to provide anglers with comfortable, performance-driven footwear options that will outlast even the longest days on the water. A thicker insole promotes noticeable shock resistance, and the anti-microbial cooling liner will ensure you leave the typical footwear stench behind. Built-in razor siping helps move water from under the shoe, improving grip on wet surfaces, and combined with a natural gum-rubber outsole, you'll be standing upright on deck all day long.

**MSRP: \$74.99**



## 2 HUK WOMEN'S CURRENT CAMO ICON X SHIRT

The Huk Camo Icon X long-sleeve shirt for ladies is built to perform on the water with UPF 30 sun protection and breathable, vented panels along the back, sides, and arms. Internal Cooling Element (ICE) technology causes an endothermic reaction on contact with sweat or moisture, lowering your body temperature so you stay cool. This shirt features Huk graphics on the chest, back, and left arm for a professional look. The shirt is made of a durable but lightweight, 100% polyester stretch knit that moves with you. It's available with or without a hoodie.

**MSRP: \$49.99 and up**



## 3 COSTA DEL MAR SUNGLASSES

The hub of Southern California's fishing, beachy and outdoors lifestyle, Del Mar, is a place of passion where the living is easy. The Costa Del Mar frame designs are laid-back and timeless. The Del Mar series polarized sunglasses come in a medium fit for everything from checking the surf to watching the ponies run, available in four lens colors.

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**4 TOADFISH OUTFITTERS' SPATULA, CAN COOLER AND SHRIMP CLEANING TOOL**

The spatula has a built-in spoon rest; the shrimp cleaner deveins, peels and butterflies shrimp in one motion. The can cooler has a non-tipping feature.

**MSRP: spatula, \$23.99; can cooler, \$21.99; shrimp tool, \$23.99**



**5 PENN PASSION COMBO**

Take a back seat to no one when you fish the Penn Passion spinning combo. This solid setup pairs the proven performance of the Passion reel matched with a rod crafted to fit the needs of the serious female angler, so you can focus on your fishing like never before. The reel has a full metal body, sealed, with stainless steel ball bearings. The rod has WINN grips designed to fit female anglers.

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LOUISIANA'S THREE-WEEK SPRING SQUIRREL SEASON GIVES HUNTERS A CHANCE TO TEST THEIR DOGS WITHOUT COMPETITION — AND PUT SOME GREAT GAME ON THE TABLE.

■ By Glynn Harris

# SPRING SQUIRRELS:

## A TASTY BONUS TEST



## Ruston's George Seacrist is a serious squirrel hunter, and his juices begin flowing as deer season ends; he knows **HIS DOGS ARE READY FOR SOME ACTION.**

"I love to deer hunt, too, but my favorite is following my dogs through the woods during squirrel season. Deer hunters will be out of the woods, and my dogs and I will have the woods virtually to ourselves," Seacrist said.

There is a problem for Seacrist, however. When February ends, so does squirrel season. Thankfully, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries has provided a balm for Seacrist's itch. Several years ago, the LDWF instituted a spring squirrel season, which fits Seacrist's plans nicely.

"Hunting squirrels in spring is a good time to start and train a young squirrel dog," he said. "Rather than concentrate so much on trying for limits of squirrels, this is the time when I get to

see if a young dog has what it takes to become a good treeing dog. When I take my young dog to the woods, I get to watch his body English to see if he has potential."

Not all dogs can handle the sound of a shotgun going off over their heads, and during the spring season, this is a good time to see if your dog is "gun shy," which can present a real problem for a squirrel hunter.

"When I take a young dog out in spring, I'll leave my shotgun at home and take my .22 rifle instead," he said. "The soft crack of a rifle compared to the blast of a 12 gauge shotgun is not so intimidating to a young dog."

Seacrist has developed a training technique so can tell, early on, if a dog is more interested in the squirrel he's pursuing rather than the sound of gunfire.

"During the fall season, I will save squirrel tails when I dress squirrels, put them in a Zip-Loc and keep them in the freezer," he said. "Then, when I go out with a young dog, I'll take a couple of squirrel tails from the freezer, thaw them out, and while the dog is shut up, I'll drag the tails on a rope around the yard and hang them in a tree.

Then, I turn the dog out and watch his reaction when he finds the tails. I'll fire my .22 in the air, and toss the tails out where he can retrieve them."



George Seacrist's squirrel dog, having already made it a successful hunt, barks at a tree to mark another bushytail.



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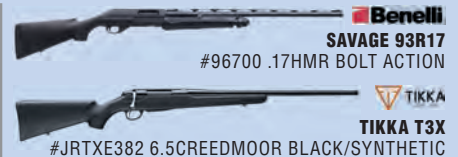
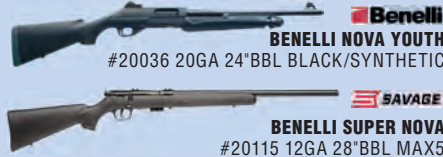
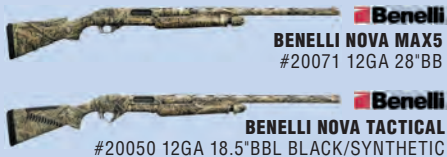
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**S**eachrist shared a comical story about how he trained a young dog one spring morning. “Using my .22 to take a fox squirrel, I would take it out of my game bag, toss it out and shoot in the air at the same time,” he said. “The dog loved it. I then switched over to my shotgun and repeated the same thing. Soon, the pup paid no attention to the gunfire; he was too interested in retrieving the squirrel. I ‘treed’ and shot the same squirrel four times, but it cured him of his gun shyness.”

Keith Sutton, an outdoor writer from Arkansas, has a major interest in hunting squirrels in spring.

George Seacrist uses Louisiana’s spring squirrel season to train his younger dogs.



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“One reason I love it is, I love to eat squirrels, and I have found that those I take in spring are tastier,” he said. “In the fall, squirrels do most of their feeding on hard mast, while in spring, they’re eating tender buds. They’re more tender and sweeter to me in spring,” he said.

In case you want to give spring squirrel hunting a try, spring season in Louisiana this year runs from May 1 through May 23. The daily bag limit is three, with possession limit of 9. In the event you wish to try one of the state’s Wildlife Management Areas, you will first need to visit [www.wlf.louisiana.gov](http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov), because while most areas are open for spring squirrel season, some are not. A word to the wise: before you go, confirm that the WMA you want to hunt is open for spring squirrel hunting. ■

### COST

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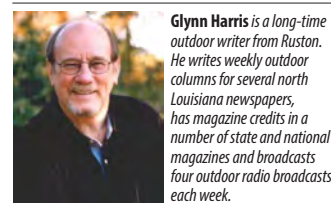
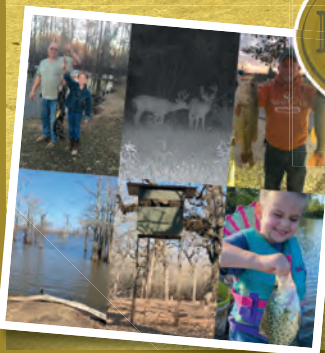
Southern Portion of LaSalle Parish on the banks of Little River. 16 miles south of Jena, LA

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Glynn Harris is a long-time outdoor writer from Ruston. He writes weekly outdoor columns for several north Louisiana newspapers, has magazine credits in a number of state and national magazines and broadcasts four outdoor radio broadcasts each week.

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## HAPPY TRAILS

Bill Garbo

Anna Beth Garbo from Robert, La., took this December buck this past season. She is a crack shot and has been hunting and bagging deer since the age of six. Her preferred caliber and bullet combo are the the .243 Win. with a 100-grain PSP bullet.



# CALIBER, BULLET SELECTION FOR WHITE-TAILED DEER

**W**hen it comes to hunting white-tailed deer, having a rifle in the right caliber and an appropriately constructed bullet can make all the difference. The terrain you hunt and the type of hunting you do determines what caliber and bullet you should use.

The ability to hit what you shoot at, however, is arguably the single most-important factor behind cartridge performance. The biggest component of this intangible factor is the person behind the gun.

I have heard gun experts give bullet placement a relative importance of as much as 70% when it comes to consistently and effectively downing game. The remaining 30% can be divided between bullet energy and bullet performance after impact, which are directly related to caliber and bullet construction.

## CALIBER QUESTION

For decades, a spirited disagreement between the advocates of small-bore, high-velocity bullets and those who champion bigger and heavier, slower-moving bullets has played out. The proponents of high velocity point to the “impact shock” that is produced by favored calibers and bullets. Likewise, the fans of bigger and slower slugs point to large entry and exit wounds they say contribute to quicker and faster kills.

Both arguments make sense under

certain conditions that occur within certain yardage ranges. Because of this, a perfectly legitimate statistical argument can be made that the .30/30 at 100 yards is a better killer than a .300 Winchester Magnum at 500 yards.

## BULLET CHOICES

The bullet is the “point of the spear.” It is the bullet that actually puts the hole in the target or drops your trophy whitetail. Your choice of rifle is just the means of getting to the point of impact. As with many other things in life, the best bullet for the task at hand is often a compromise. Modern cartridges are usually available in a variety of bullet weights and styles.

One bullet style and weight cannot be expected to do all things well in a single rifle. Select a bullet that best fits the environment of your hunt. Whitetail habitat spans the range from wide-open agricultural fields, to close-range heavy brush. A caliber and bullet combination that works well in one instance will likely give disappointing results in the other.

The array of available bullet styles include: flat-base, boat-tail, pointed soft point (PSP), rounded soft point, ballistic tip — on-and-on. Each style has unique



Whitetail cartridge comparison (top to bottom) .223 Rem, .243 Win, .270 Win, .30/30 Win, .30-06 Sprfld, .308 Rem, .35 Whelen.

aerodynamic and kinetic properties that you can use to best fit the prevailing conditions of where and how you hunt.



**Bill Garbo** is a petroleum engineer and avid whitetail hunter from Madison, Miss. He has lived and hunted out west and taken numerous big game species, but hunting big old mature southern whitetail bucks is his favorite pursuit by a country mile.

## UP TO .25 CALIBER

It is a widely accepted opinion that the only caliber smaller than .25 that can be recommended for deer hunting is either the 6mm or .243, and even then, shot placement is critical. No .22 caliber cartridge should ever be used on deer or deer-sized animals. And yes, I have to admit, skilled marksmen at close range can and have dispatched deer with the .22 and .223, but the average hunter is not in that class.

## .25 TO .30 CALIBERS

Many cartridges in this caliber range are well suited for deer. Mainstays are the .270 Winchester, the .280 Remington and the 7mm/08 Remington. The great Jack O'Conner absolutely swore by the .270 Winchester, using this caliber to hunt big game the world over.

## .30 CALIBER AND LARGER

A number of calibers in this range are very efficient deer killers, but at the same time, there are a number that are far too powerful for deer hunting due to excessive recoil and other factors.

Right off the bat, my short list of great choices for deer would include calibers such as the .308 Winchester, .30/06 Springfield, .30/30 Winchester, .35 Remington and the old, standby .45/70. In recent years, the .35 Whelen has regained popularity and has become one of my personal favorite whitetail cartridges.

## IN SUMMARY

If you were to gather 10 experts on deer-hunting calibers and bullets, you'd get 10 theories about the best choice. In my personal view, after more than 50 years in the whitetail woods, the answer is not a simple one. A satisfactory answer would involve type of rifle, bore and cartridge, bullet style and weight, hunter experience, and practice, practice and more practice. ■

## POINT-BLANK VELOCITIES, REMAINING ENERGY LEVELS OF POPULAR CARTRIDGES

Shows maximum range at which these cartridges retain at least 1,200 foot-pounds of energy, considered by to be the minimum "wallop" required for the efficient killing of deer and antelope. From: "Carmichael's Guide to Hunting Cartridges."

Caliber	Bullet Weight (Grains)	Muzzle Velocity (Feet/Second)	Range (Yards)
.223 Rem	55	3,340	0
.243 Win	100	2,690	250
.270 Win	130	3,110	435
7mm/08 Rem	140	2,860	410
.30/30 Win	150	2,390	120
.30/06 Spfd	150	2,910	435
.308 Win	150	2,820	345
.35 Rem	150	2,300	95



### Hunting / Recreation:

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# Hunting/Fishing SCRAPBOOK



**Kristin Dykes**

Kristin Dykes killed her first deer in Plaquemines Parish on Jan. 25, 2021.



**Johnny Ingram**

Johnny Ingram holds up a giant, a 9.25-pound lunker bass.



**Kristen Comardelle**

Kristen Comardelle poses with a beautiful 10-point buck taken on private property in Mississippi on Dec. 18.



**Koby Bruce**

Koby Bruce killed his first buck while hunting with his grandfather in Alabama.



**Jarit Domangue**

Jarit Domangue, 13, killed this great buck on his family's lease near Port Gibson, Miss., on Dec. 19. It's his best buck to date.

## GOT PHOTOS? WE WANT 'EM

Send us your photos, and you may appear on the pages of the most widely read outdoor magazine in the Bayou State. Send clean, sharp shots of you with your fish, deer, ducks, rabbits, squirrels, etc. to [images@LouisianaSportsman.com](mailto:images@LouisianaSportsman.com)

Digital images must be at least 500KB and in jpeg format. Print photos cannot be returned.



**Evie Richmond**

Evie Richmond celebrated her 11th birthday in Dulac with her grandfather and friends.



**Lilly Barras**

Lilly Barras, 11, of Lafayette bagged her first wood duck hen during the second split on Dec. 5, 2020. She was hunting near Evergreen with her father and grandfather.



**Braeden Peterson**

Braeden Peterson show off with a 28-inch redfish caught off the long rocks in Hopedale using shrimp.



**Kevin McClary**

Kevin McClary hooked this bass while bank fishing in Bayou Gauche.



**Caden Bruce**

Caden Bruce killed this nice, big doe while hunting with his grandfather in Alabama.

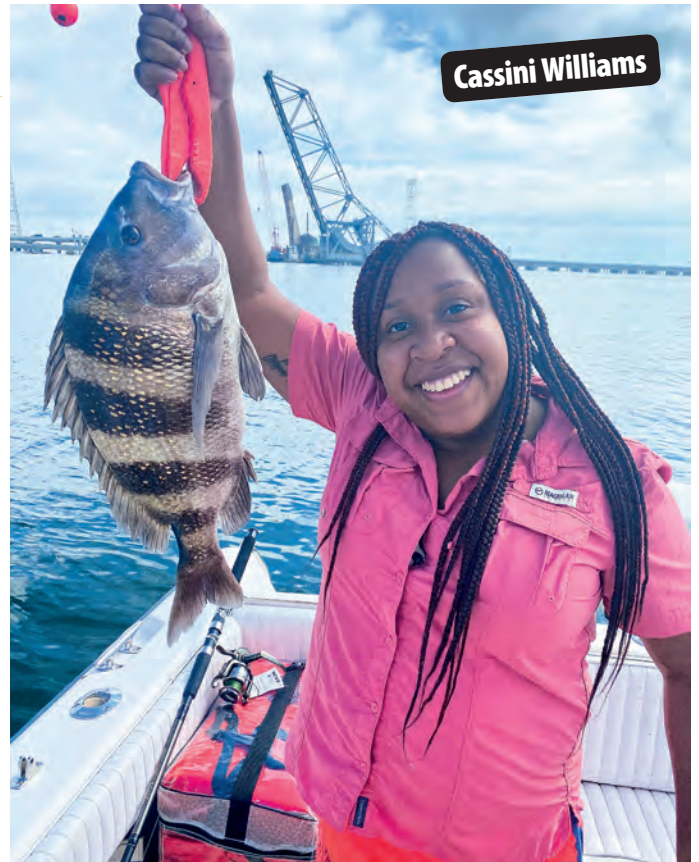


# Hunting/Fishing SCRAPBOOK



**Mac Pardue**

Mac Pardue, 11, poses with his first turkey, taken at the Kisatchie National Forest on opening day of youth season. He used a 20-gauge Franchi on the 20-pound gobbler with a 9-inch beard.



**Cassini Williams**

As her husband was pulling up the anchor with the boat in neutral, Cassini Williams reeled in this 22-inch, 6-pound sheepshead at the Trestles and the Twin Span Bridge on Nov. 11, 2020.



**Seth, Tiffani & Charlie**

Seth, Tiffani and Charlie Ferguson went with Reel Shot Guide Service out of Venice and caught these nice fish.



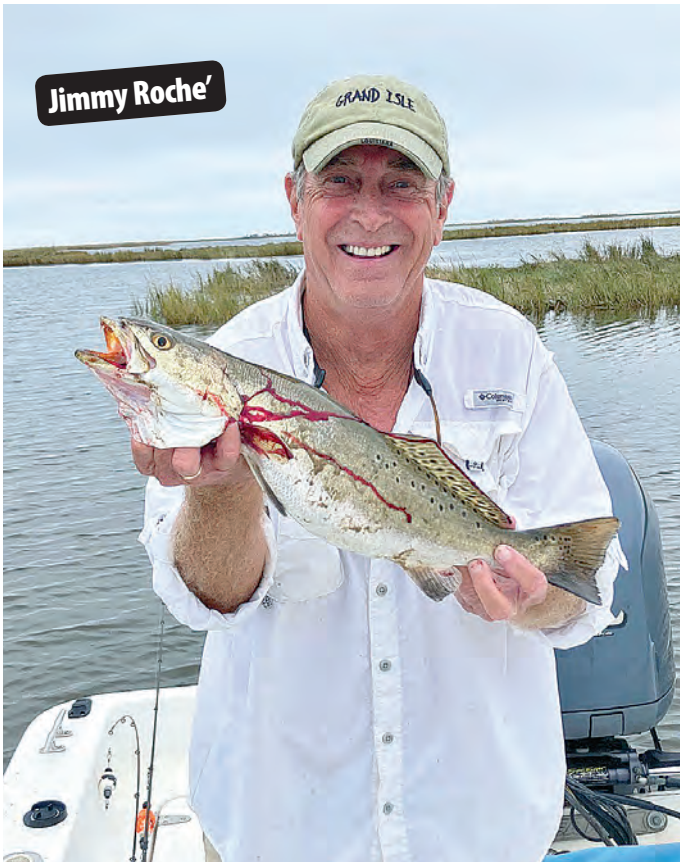
**Harris Dickson**

Harris Dickson began his angling journey not too long ago. He caught his first redfish in the July 2020 heat in Delacroix.



**Kevin O'Neal**

Kevin O'Neal came from California to catch beautiful reds with spoons over grass flats with Capt. Olden of Chauvin.



**Jimmy Roche'**

Jimmy Roche' caught this 21-inch speck on Nov. 10, 2020, in Delacroix.



**Gerald & Raymond**

Gerald Gibson (right) is pictured here with his fishing buddy, Raymond, who unfortunately passed away this past year.

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New design concepts are the pinnacle of Zillion's durability and innovation. The Hyper Drive Design consists of four new elements: Hyper Armed Housing, Hyper Drive Digigear, Hyper Double Support pinion gear, and Hyper Tough Clutch. Hyperdrive Digigear is a new gear design that makes the teeth of the gears more efficient at transferring power, therefore making the gear set feel smoother, more powerful and also reducing gear noise. The reel also features Hyper Armed Housing, an aluminum frame and side-plate for maximum rigidity and precision performance of the internal components. Hyper Double Support is a two-bearing support system for the reel's pinion gear which means no side-to-side movement and an ultra-smooth gear rotation and retrieve.

For a video of the new Zillion SV TW, go to:  
<https://youtu.be/LEbdH31ugw>





# Hunting/Fishing SCRAPBOOK



**Mason Green**

Mason Green, with the Atlanta High School Fishing Team, holds up a 7.3-pound bass he caught on Mill Creek in Saline.



**Mike Jones**

Mike Jones shows off a 78-pound gar he caught in the Tchefuncte River using jugs.



**Justin and Cheryl Governale**

Justin Governale and his mom, Cheryl, are proud of a nice red caught while fishing Calcasieu Lake on Nov. 7, 2020.



**John Carter**

John Carter pulled in this nice bass while fishing the Saline-Larto Complex.



**Lucas Joseph Sonnier**

Lucas Joseph Sonnier, 9, took his first buck on a hunt with his dad, Michael Sonnier, in the St. Mary Parish marsh. The 9-pointer weighed 170 pounds.



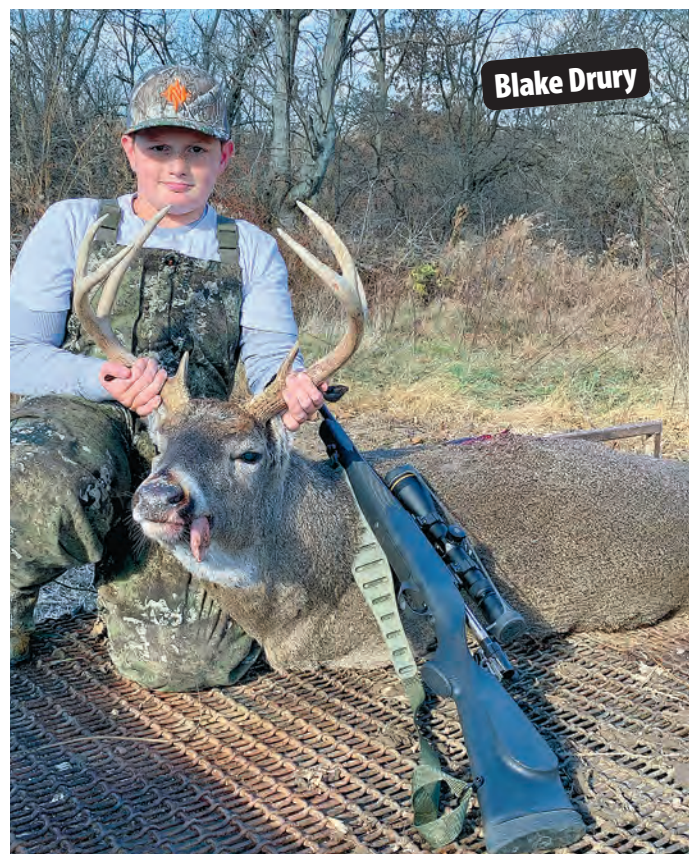
Grady Hill, 9, killed his first turkey in West Feliciana Parish on April 3, 2021, while hunting with his grandfather, Bruce Dodd. The gobbler had an 11-inch beard and 1-inch spurs.



Bradley Thomas took his first deer, this 9-pointer, which was killed on public land.



Lea Paxton was fishing in Fourchon when she hooked this 27-inch red on a cochoe minnow at sunset on Sept. 12.



Blake Drury, 13, of Mandeville, killed this 8-point buck over his Thanksgiving holiday last fall.



# Hunting/Fishing SCRAPBOOK



**Dennis Curry**

Dennis Curry was fishing on Caddo Lake when he caught this 9.12-pound bass. The fish was registered and released back into the lake.



**Finlei Bourgeois**

Eight-year-old Finlei Bourgeois took her first deer, a 6-pointer, in Kentwood on Dec. 5, 2020. She is the fourth generation to take a deer out of her grandfather's stand. Her father, Derek Bourgeois, was in the stand guiding her to this great buck.



**Jaida Moreau**

Jaida Moreau was fishing Toledo Bend Reservoir when she caught this 7.4-pound bass on March 24, 2018.



**Grant Allen**

Grant Allen caught his first sac-a-lait with his grandfather, Vernon Pfister, on Lake Des Allemands.



**Therion Duncan**

High water didn't stop Therion Duncan of Baker from catching 25 big crappie from Lake Sullivan.



**Mitchell Crooks**

Mitchell Crooks poses with his trophy 11-point buck. The unofficial score was 143.



**Craig Westcott Jr.**

Craig Westcott Jr. poses with his father's 3-man limit in Delacroix Island on Nov. 22.



**Bonnie Songne**

Bonnie Songne caught her first bass at Toledo Bend. It weighed in at 4 pounds.



**Tana Cararas**

Tana Cararas proudly displays her first tagged fish, a red caught May 25 in Fourchon.



**Astro Tables** is far more effective than "moon tables," because it takes into account critical solar energies as well as lunar.

• The "Best Days" column is based on the ever-changing positions of the sun and the moon, rating each day on a scale of 0 to 100. The higher the number, the more solar/lunar influence that day is experiencing (see "Value" column or corresponding black bars).

• The two Primary periods (Moon Overhead and Moon Underfoot) vary in length from one hour to three-and-one-half hours, depending on a number of important lunar cycles, such as how close the moon is to the earth that day and how high its orbit is. The solar symbols alert you to when a Primary period overlaps a major solar period (eg: Dawn, High-Noon, and Dusk). The secondary periods of Moonrise and Moonset last about one hour each... 30 minutes before and after the listed time. (See key at bottom of each month for more detail.)

• **Astro Tables** is a quick-reference version of its parent publication, the **PrimeTimes Wall Calendar**, which is recommended for those wishing more complete data on the best days and times to go fishing and hunting for the entire year (see "Available Products" below).

• **PrimeTimes** forecasts are based on solar/lunar research at a leading college of astrophysics and our own research pond/wildlife area. Annual data is supplied by the U.S. Naval Observatory. All times are adjusted to the center of your time zone and for Daylight Saving Time.

**AVAILABLE PRODUCTS:**  
**The 2021 PrimeTimes Wall Calendar.** \$13.95 (plus \$4 s&h). Know the best days, best times, and their relative strengths for all of 2021 with this information-packed, full-color, 11-inch by 17-inch, graphic peaks

and-valleys forecaster. Includes rise and set times for the sun and moon, space to log your catches, "Timely Tips," plus fish and game symbols showing you each month's don't-miss periods. Also includes exclusive summary charts revealing the best and worst days of 2021, the year's best periods, a look ahead at 2022, and more. Comes with FREE 2021 Astro Tables pocket calendar, which sells separately for \$8.95, plus \$3 s&h.

**Book: "How to Know When to Go" by Rick Taylor.** \$14.95 (plus \$4 s&h). 100 pages, 43 illustrations. A comprehensive look at the main factors influencing fish and game activity periods, plus how to devise an effective when-to-go game plan using any year's PrimeTimes calendars. Individual assessments of bass, panfish, deer, turkey, and more.

**2021 Ultimate PrimeTimes software for PCs.** \$29.95 (plus \$3 s&h, or no s&h if downloaded from web). The world's best forecaster allows you to fine-tune the peak times to your exact location, quarry, and even weather. Too many features to list here, including making your own App. For more details, please call us or visit our web site (see below).

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2021 MAY	BEST DAYS				VALUE
	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCL.	
Sat 1	██	██	██	██	31
Sun 2	██	██	██	██	36
Mon 3	██	██	██	██	46
Tue 4	██	██	██	██	37
Wed 5	██	██	██	██	33
Thu 6	██	██	██	██	35
Fri 7	██	██	██	██	36
Sat 8	██	██	██	██	48
Sun 9	██	██	██	██	61
Mon 10	██	██	██	██	72
Tue 11	██	██	██	██	80
Wed 12	██	██	██	██	72
Thu 13	██	██	██	██	65
Fri 14	██	██	██	██	56
Sat 15	██	██	██	██	53
Sun 16	██	██	██	██	54
Mon 17	██	██	██	██	55
Tue 18	██	██	██	██	59
Wed 19	██	██	██	██	68
Thu 20	██	██	██	██	56
Fri 21	██	██	██	██	49
Sat 22	██	██	██	██	46
Sun 23	██	██	██	██	54
Mon 24	██	██	██	██	62
Tue 25	██	██	██	██	73
Wed 26	██	██	██	██	75
Thu 27	██	██	██	██	60
Fri 28	██	██	██	██	50
Sat 29	██	██	██	██	39
Sun 30	██	██	██	██	34
Mon 31	██	██	██	██	35

25 50 75  
AVERAGE

LUNAR PERIODS					
TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED					
MOON RISE	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT		
12:29 AM	4:59 am - 5:45 am	10:15 AM	5:24 pm - 6:10 pm	☉	Low
1:27 AM	5:58 am - 6:46 am ☀	11:19 AM	6:23 pm - 7:11 pm ☀	☾	
2:16 AM	6:49 am - 7:47 am ☀	12:24 PM	7:14 pm - 8:12 pm ☀	☾	Half
2:57 AM	7:36 am - 8:44 am ☀	1:28 PM	8:01 pm - 9:09 pm ☀	☾	
3:31 AM	8:14 am - 9:40 am	2:30 PM	8:39 pm - 10:05 pm	☾	
4:01 AM	8:51 am - 10:33 am	3:29 PM	9:16 pm - 10:58 pm	☾	
4:28 AM	9:25 am - 11:23 am	4:26 PM	9:50 pm - 11:48 pm	☾	
4:54 AM	9:55 am - 12:13 pm	5:22 PM	10:20 pm - 12:38 am	☾	
5:19 AM	10:27 am - 1:03 pm	6:18 PM	10:52 pm - 1:28 am	☾	
5:46 AM	11:00 am - 1:52 pm ☀	7:15 PM	11:25 pm - 2:17 am	☾	
6:14 AM	11:34 am - 2:44 pm ☀	8:12 PM	11:59 pm - Midnight	☾	New & Apogee
6:45 AM	12:13 pm - 3:35 pm ☀	9:09 PM	Midnight - 3:09 am	☾	
7:20 AM	12:55 pm - 4:27 pm	10:06 PM	12:38 am - 4:00 am	☾	
8:01 AM	1:42 pm - 5:18 pm	11:02 PM	1:20 am - 4:52 am	☾	
8:47 AM	2:31 pm - 6:11 pm	11:54 PM	2:07 am - 5:43 am	☾	High
9:40 AM	3:23 pm - 7:03 pm		2:56 am - 6:36 am	☾	
10:37 AM	4:18 pm - 7:50 pm	12:42 AM	3:48 am - 7:28 am	☾	
11:38 AM	5:15 pm - 8:35 pm ☀	1:25 AM	4:43 am - 8:15 am ☀	☾	
12:42 PM	6:11 pm - 9:17 pm ☀	2:04 AM	5:40 am - 9:00 am ☀	☾	Half
1:47 PM	7:08 pm - 9:58 pm ☀	2:38 AM	6:36 am - 9:42 am ☀	☾	
2:53 PM	8:07 pm - 10:37 pm	3:10 AM	7:33 am - 10:23 am	☾	
4:01 PM	9:08 pm - 11:14 pm	3:41 AM	8:32 am - 11:02 am	☾	
5:11 PM	10:10 pm - 11:56 pm	4:13 AM	9:33 am - 11:39 am	☾	
6:24 PM	11:17 pm - Midnight	4:46 AM	10:35 am - 12:21 pm	☾	
7:40 PM	Midnight - 12:39 am	5:24 AM	11:42 am - 1:04 pm	☾	Perigee
8:56 PM	12:24 am - 1:30 am	6:07 AM	12:49 pm - 1:55 pm ☀	☾	Full
10:09 PM	1:33 am - 2:25 am	6:58 AM	1:58 pm - 2:50 pm ☀	☾	
11:14 PM	2:40 am - 3:26 am	7:56 AM	3:05 pm - 3:51 pm ☀	☾	Low
	3:44 am - 4:30 am	9:01 AM	4:09 pm - 4:55 pm	☾	
12:09 AM	4:41 am - 5:33 am	10:09 AM	5:06 pm - 5:58 pm	☾	
12:54 AM	5:30 am - 6:36 am ☀	11:16 AM	5:55 pm - 7:01 pm	☾	

ANY LUNAR PERIOD IS ENHANCED WHEN IT OVERLAPS A KEY SOLAR PERIOD. THE BEST OF THESE OVERLAPS ARE DESIGNATED BY THE SUN SYMBOLS. ☀ = DAWN ☀ = HIGH NOON ☀ = DUSK

WHILE THE LESSER MOONRISE AND -SET OVERLAPS (ABOUT 30 MIN. BEFORE AND AFTER THE LISTED TIME) ARE DESIGNATED BY BOLD BLACK TYPE.

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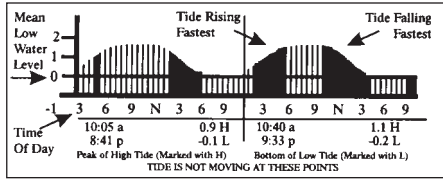




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## How to use the SPORTSMAN Tide Guide



Fish feed most actively when the tide is moving. Louisiana Sportsman has made it simple to spot the most-active feeding periods each day in the Tide Guide. Just fish those times indicated in black. To find the best time to fish your favorite honeyhole, find the spot under Tide Corrections that is closest to the area, and add or subtract the time from the corresponding daily prediction.

### Tide Corrections

Location	HIGH	LOW
Barataria Pass	+1:00	-0:10
Bastian Island	+0:41	+0:12
Bay Gardene	+2:51	+2:44
Bayou BonFouca	+9:59	+10:11
Breton Islands	+0:54	+0:48
Caillou Boca	+0:40	+0:48
Caminada Pass	+0:20	+0:12
Chandeleur Light	+0:37	+0:34
Chef Pass	+5:17	+5:07
Cocodrie	+1:22	+1:33
Comfort Island	+1:34	+0:54
Delacroix Island	+3:42	+3:31
Empire Jetty	-1:03	-1:45
Four Bayou Pass	+2:18	+0:17
Gardner Island	+0:40	+0:47
Grand Pass	+1:48	+1:16
Head of Passes	-0:48	+0:00
Hopedale	+4:17	+4:56
Independence Island	+2:29	+1:59
Jack Bay	+1:59	+1:28
Joseph Bayou	-0:36	-1:37
Lafitte	+1:45	+2:51
Long Point, Lake Borgne	+2:28	+2:11
Manila Village	+2:32	+3:13
Michoud Substation	+5:24	+5:02
New Canal (Bucktown)	+10:34	+10:49
North Pass	-0:31	-0:37
Paris Road Bridge	+5:53	+5:58
Pelican Islands	+2:26	+2:26
Pointe a la Hache	+3:12	+3:01
Port Eads	-0:17	-1:37
Raccoon Point	-0:03	-0:20
Shell Beach	+4:32	+4:25
Ship Shoal Light	-1:54	-1:50
South Pass, Miss. R.	-1:13	-1:20
Southwest Pass, Miss. R.	-0:38	-1:33
Tchefuncte River	+10:23	+11:01
Timbalier Island	+0:19	+0:23
Wine Island	+1:08	+1:02
<b>Calcasieu Pass, Lighthouse Wharf</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>LOW</b>
Cote Blanche Island	+4:33	+3:40
Eugene Island	+1:49	-0:39
Lighthouse Point	+0:58	-0:53
Mermentau River ent.	+0:20	+0:25
Point Au Fer	+1:53	-1:02
Point Chevreul	+3:16	+0:30
Rabbit Island	+2:01	-0:36
Shell Island	+3:08	+0:45
South Point	+1:55	-0:33
Southwest Pass, Vermillion Bay	+1:42	+0:51
Weeks Bay	+3:58	+3:56

### East Point Grand Isle

Order the Tide Guides for over 40 locations throughout Louisiana. Call 1-800-538-4355 or go on line [www.lasmag.com](http://www.lasmag.com)

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
2	3 LQ	4	5	6	7	8
1:17 am -0.2 L 2:04 pm 1.4 H	2:22 am -0.1 L 3:03 pm 1.2 H	3:17 am 0.0 L 4:00 pm 1.1 H	3:59 am 0.2 L 5:00 pm 0.9 H	4:20 am 0.4 L 1:33 pm 0.7 H 5:04 pm 0.7 L 8:02 pm 0.7 L	4:01 am 0.5 L 10:50 am 0.7 H 6:07 pm 0.5 L	9:39 am 0.8 H 6:47 pm 0.3 L
9	10	11 NM	12	13	14	15
9:17 am 1.0 H 7:22 pm 0.2 L	9:21 am 1.1 H 7:55 pm 0.1 L	9:38 am 1.2 H 8:29 pm 0.0 L	10:02 am 1.3 H 9:06 pm 0.0 L	10:33 am 1.3 H 9:48 pm -0.1 L	11:09 am 1.3 H 10:35 pm -0.1 L	11:49 am 1.3 H 11:25 pm -0.1 L
16	17	18	19 FQ	20	21	22
12:33 pm 1.3 H	12:16 am -0.1 L 1:17 pm 1.3 H	1:03 am -0.1 L 2:03 pm 1.2 H	1:46 am 0.0 L 2:48 pm 1.1 H	2:20 am 0.1 L 3:32 pm 0.9 H	2:41 am 0.3 L 12:04 pm 0.7 H	2:25 am 0.5 L 9:27 am 0.7 H 5:15 pm 0.4 L
23	24	25	26 FM	27	28	29
8:34 am 0.9 H 6:04 pm 0.1 L	8:30 am 0.9 H 6:56 pm -0.1 L	8:54 am 1.3 H 7:51 pm -0.3 L	9:33 am 1.5 H 8:50 pm -0.4 L	10:20 am 1.6 H 9:52 pm -0.4 L	11:12 am 1.6 H 10:55 pm -0.4 L	12:05 pm 1.5 H 11:56 pm -0.3 L
30	31					
12:55 pm 1.4 H	12:52 am -0.2 L 1:39 pm 1.3 H					

### Calcasieu Pass Lighthouse Wharf

Order the Tide Guides for over 40 locations throughout Louisiana. Call 1-800-538-4355 or go on line [www.lasmag.com](http://www.lasmag.com)

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
2	3 LQ	4	5	6	7	8
1:35 am -0.2 L 10:47 am 2.1 H	2:47 am 0.1 L 11:55 am 2.1 H 5:34 pm 1.6 L 7:54 pm 1.6 L	4:00 am 0.3 L 12:46 pm 2.0 H 6:15 pm 1.4 L 9:59 pm 1.6 H	5:10 am 0.5 L 1:19 pm 1.9 H 6:51 pm 1.2 L 11:54 pm 1.6 H	6:18 am 0.7 L 1:39 pm 1.8 H 7:23 pm 1.0 L	6:18 am 0.7 L 1:23 am 1.7 H 7:18 am 0.9 L 1:47 pm 1.7 H 7:51 pm 0.8 L	2:24 am 1.8 H 8:09 am 1.0 L 1:42 pm 1.7 H 8:18 pm 0.6 L
9	10	11 NM	12	13	14	15
3:19 am 1.9 H 8:55 am 1.2 L 1:38 pm 1.7 H 8:43 pm 0.4 L	4:11 am 2.0 H 9:39 am 1.4 L 1:46 pm 1.7 H 9:10 pm 0.2 L	4:57 am 2.0 H 10:20 am 1.5 L 1:59 pm 1.8 H 9:40 pm 0.1 L	5:35 am 2.1 H 10:53 am 1.6 L 2:09 pm 1.8 H 10:13 pm 0.0 L	6:10 am 2.1 H 11:15 am 1.7 L 2:11 pm 1.8 H 10:48 pm 0.0 L	6:50 am 2.1 H 11:33 am 1.8 L 2:00 pm 1.8 L 11:26 pm 0.1 L	7:46 am 2.0 H 11:58 am 1.8 L 2:00 pm 1.9 H
16	17	18	19 FQ	20	21	22
12:07 am 0.1 L 8:59 am 2.0 H	12:53 am 0.2 L 9:57 am 2.0 H	1:50 am 0.3 L 10:43 am 2.0 H	2:54 am 0.4 L 11:18 am 2.0 H	3:58 am 0.5 L 11:42 am 2.0 H 5:39 pm 1.3 L 9:58 pm 1.5 H	5:01 am 0.7 L 11:57 am 1.9 H 6:09 pm 1.0 L 11:44 pm 1.7 H	6:09 am 0.9 L 12:12 pm 1.9 H 6:47 pm 0.6 L
23	24	25	26 FM	27	28	29
1:21 am 1.9 H 7:14 am 1.1 L 12:32 am 1.9 H 7:27 pm 0.2 L	2:31 am 2.1 H 8:13 am 1.3 L 12:56 pm 1.9 H 8:09 pm -0.2 L	3:40 am 2.3 H 9:08 am 1.5 L 1:23 pm 2.0 H 8:54 pm -0.3 L	4:49 am 2.4 H 10:03 am 1.6 L 1:54 pm 2.1 H 9:41 pm -0.6 L	5:51 am 2.4 H 10:55 am 1.8 L 2:27 pm 2.1 H 10:31 pm -0.6 L	6:53 am 2.4 H 11:45 am 1.8 L 3:03 pm 2.1 H 11:22 pm -0.5 L	8:02 am 2.3 H 12:41 pm 1.9 L 3:46 pm 2.0 H
30	31					
12:14 am -0.3 L 9:12 am 2.2 H 2:22 pm 1.8 L 4:46 pm 1.8 L	1:12 am 0.0 L 10:09 am 2.1 H 4:00 pm 1.6 L 6:08 pm 1.7 H					

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2021

These regulations are unofficial. For official regulations, always check the Department of Wildlife & Fisheries pamphlet and/or the federal pamphlet. www.wlf.louisiana.gov

SALTWATER

STATE REGULATIONS (0-10.357 miles<sup>^</sup>)

FISH Species	Minimum Length	Bag Limit (per person)
Greater Amberjack*~	34" FL	1/day*
Lesser Amberjack, Banded Rudderfish*	14-22" FL	5/day (aggregate)
Yellowfin Tuna	27" CFL	3/day
Bluefin Tuna	73" CFL	1 per vessel per year*
Bigeye Tuna	27" CFL	None
Blue Marlin	99" LJFL	None
White Marlin	66" LJFL	None
Sailfish	63" LJFL	None
Swordfish*	29" CL or 33 lbs. DW	5 per vessel per trip
Cobia (ling or lemon fish)	36" FL	2/day
Drum, Black	16" TL	5/day#
Drum, Red (redfish)	16" TL	5/day#
Flounder, Southern	None	10/day
Groupers* Gag <sup>^</sup> & Black <sup>^</sup>	24" TL	4/day (aggregate)*
Scamp <sup>^</sup>	16" TL	
Nassau & Goliath	UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS	
Yellowfin <sup>^</sup>	20" TL	
Red <sup>^</sup>	20" TL	2 of 4 grouper total
Atlantic Sharpnose & Bonnethead shark@	None	1/day
Shortfin Mako Shark@	Males 71" FL / Females 83" FL	1/day/vessel/aggregate
Other sharks (except prohibited species)@	54" FL	1/day/vessel/aggregate
King Mackerel*	24" FL	3/day
Spanish Mackerel*	12" FL	15/day
Striped mullet	None	100 pounds/day
Black seabass	None	None
Seatrout, Spotted (Speckled Trout)	12" TL*	25/day*
Red Snapper*	16" TL	2/day*
Other Snapper		5 mutton in 10 snapper aggregate
Mutton Snapper	18" TL	
Cubera, Yellowtail, Gray (mangrove)	12" TL	10 in aggregate*
Queen, Blackfin, Silk, Wenchman	None	
Vermilion Snapper	10" TL	
Schoolmaster, Dog, Mahogany	None	None
Gray Triggerfish*	15" FL	1/day in aggregate
Lane Snapper	8" TL	
Almaco Jack, Goldface Tilefish, & Bluefin Tilefish	None	20/person/day in aggregate*
Blackline Tilefish, Anchor Tilefish	None	
Tripletail	18" TL	5/day
Hogfish	14" FL	5/day

CFL = curved fork length LJFL = lower jaw fork length CL = carcass length  
DW = dressed weight LJTF = lower jaw to tail fork FL = fork length

FRESHWATER

FISH Species	Minimum Size Limit	Bag Limit (per person)
Crappie	None*	50/day*
Buffalo Fish	16" TL	25/day
Freshwater Drum (Gaspargou)	12" TL	25/day
Channel Catfish	11" TL*	***
Blue Catfish	12" TL*	***
Bowfin	16" TL	None
Flathead Catfish	14" TL*	***
Crawfish	None	150 lbs./day
Paddlefish	30" max LJFL	2*
Shad	None	50 lbs./day
Black Bass (largemouth & spotted)	None*	10/day*
Striped Bass/ Hybrid Striped Bass	**	5/day*
Sturgeon	UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS	
White Bass	None	50/day*
Yellow Bass	None	50/day*
Bluegill (Bream)	None	None*

\* see exceptions in pamphlet. \*\* no more than two may exceed 30 inches.  
\*\*\* catfish limit is 100 in aggregate; however, 25 fish in aggregate may be undersized.  
# only one fish may exceed 27 inches. @Shark season is closed between April 1 and June 30.  
<sup>^</sup> Closed season for gag grouper Jan. 1 - May 31. Closed season for black, red, yellowfin, yellowmouth & scamp grouper from Feb. 1 - March 31. ~ Greater amberjack season is open May 1-31 and Aug. 1 - Oct. 31. \* Closed season on gray triggerfish Jan. 1 - Feb. 28 and June 1 - July 31.

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# POP AND KNOCKIN'

E Pop 80 provides anglers the perfect bait for aggressive topwater bites. The E Pop 80 has an extremely loud popping action with a loud knocking sound – calling in fish from a distance. The bait is designed to cast easily and can be walked back to the boat, creating life-like action that bass can't resist. Paired with Gamakatsu's #4 treble hook on the front and a #4 Gamakatsu feather treble hook on the back.



**E-POP 80**

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## SPRO LITTLE JOHN MD 50

Summer is just around the corner, and for bass fishermen, it comes carrying the need to get just a little deeper to fool Mr. Largemouth.

That's where SPRO's Little John MD 50 crankbait enters the picture. A deeper-diving brother to the Little John 50, the MD 50 will reach down 7 to 9 feet.

Designed by bass pro John Crews, the MD 50 has a longer, thicker lip and a steel ball that generates a loud, bass-attracting rattle. It dives quickly and deflects easily off structure.

The MD 50 features No. 5 round-bend Gamakatsu trebles. It weighs ½-ounce, is 50mm long and comes in 27 different color patterns.

**MSRP: \$11.99.**

**For more info, visit:  
[www.spro.com](http://www.spro.com)**



## MILLENNIUM Q200 BUCK HUT

If you like the idea of a shooting house for a deer blind, but you want one a little more portable than the big, wooden job you hoisted onto that 4x4 platform, the Millennium Q200 Buck Hut may be just what the doctor ordered.

The Buck Hut measures 7-foot-4 wide and 4-foot deep by 7-foot tall, and it weighs just 323 pounds, making it relatively easy to move if you need to, but with a 500-pound carrying capacity. The height makes it perfect for bowhunters who want to stand to shoot, but it fits sit-down hunters with guns and crossbows.

Blind material is a waterproof, heavy duty, soft-shell, with the frame powder-coated steel. Support legs include two that are adjustable for leveling on unlevel ground, and each stand includes an anchoring kit.

Windows can be shaped and adjusted for rifle, bow or crossbow, and each has an adjustable-height shooting rest.

The overall height is 15-foot-8, and the overall footprint is 11-foot-9 by 8-foot.

**MSRP: \$799**

**For more info, visit: [www.millennium-stands.com](http://www.millennium-stands.com)**

## FRABILL TROUT NET SERIES

Frabill's series of floating trout nets brings to anglers who are wading or fishing from small boats or kayaks, a handy, excellent aid for finishing up a battle with a worthy, finned opponent.

First, the short handle makes it easy to move when trying to net a fish in swift or still water. The hoop is buoyant, so if it's dropped in the drink, it will stay on the surface. You shouldn't drop it, either, because an attached lanyard can keep it tethered to you or your vessel.

The hoop is finished in gunmetal, so there's no shine to spook a fish that's on the way to the square-bottom of the net, which is built with tangle-free, dipped micromesh material so a fish's slime coat won't be damaged and so you won't spend any time trying to untangle hooks from the net.

Nets come in five sizes, from teardrop to square, depending on the kind of fishing you're doing. There will be one to fit your needs.

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\$27.99**

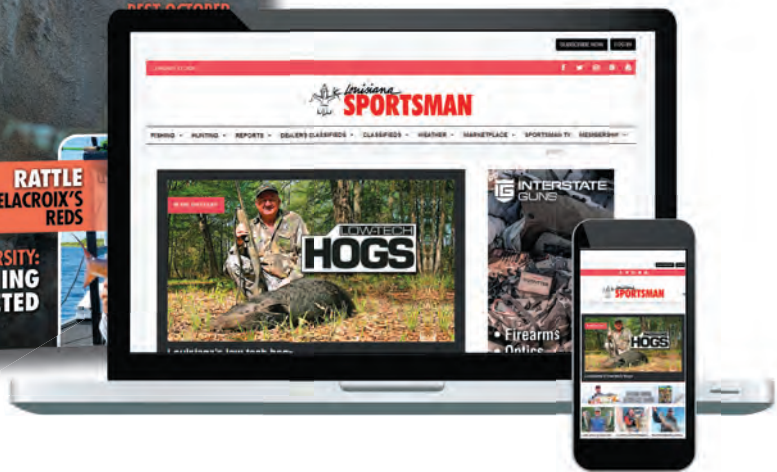
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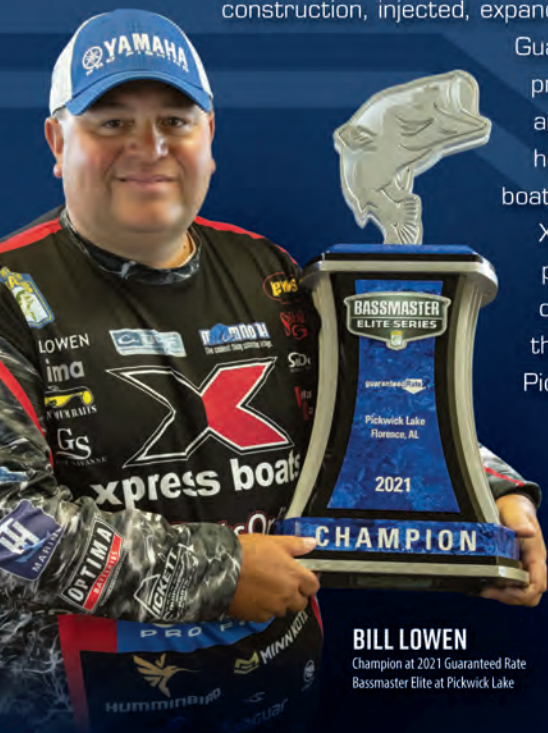


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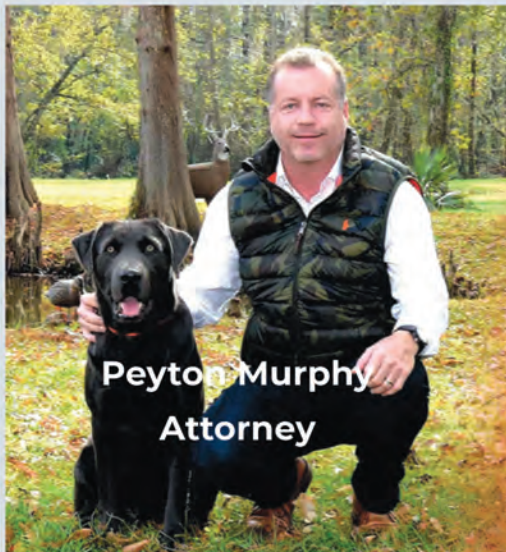
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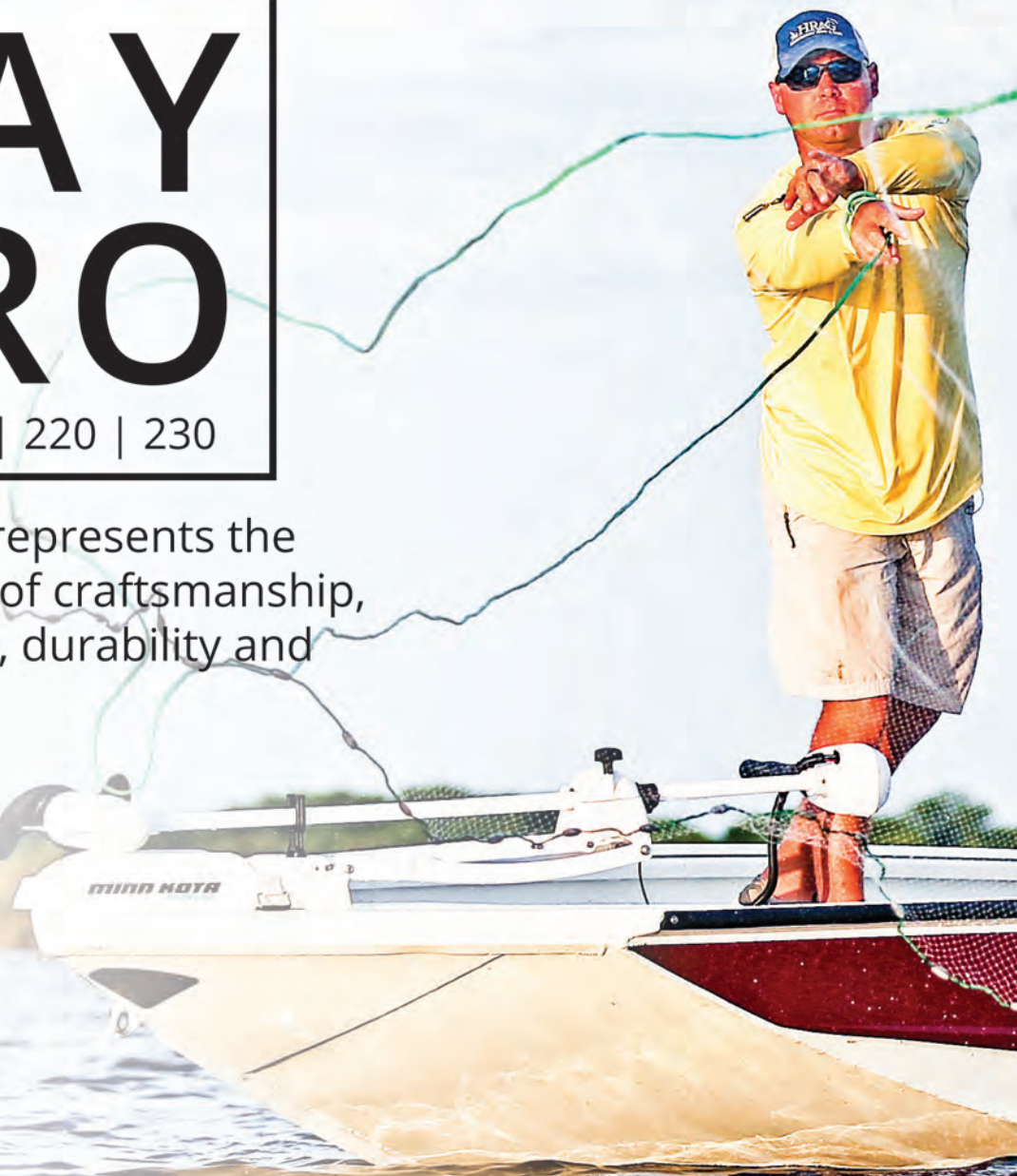
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